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ABSTRACT

The study of leadership has faltered partly because the wrong phenomenon has been studied. Whereas the usual definition considers leadership either as a personal property or as a property of position, this paper argues that it is a transient phenomenon residing neither in the person nor the situation and one that can be practiced equally well by different social players. Four attempts to redefine leadership, by Selznick, Burns, Tucker, and Bennis, do come closer to developing a hermaneutic view; however, all imply that leadership is an intrinsic property possessed by certain individuals. But in fact, leadership resides in actions, not in persons. Leadership acts are a communal, democratic effort founded in the notion of praxis and each act must have a social context and critical audience. Three elements of leadership are that it involves the penetration of structure, that it must be politically and critically educative and that it is conditioned on language and communication. Included in the document are three readings that support this position. First, "Leadership: The Socratic Model," by L. Grob, asserts the critical spirit as the ground for all leadership; second, "Leadership Research: Choosing Gods and Devils on the Run," by M. W. McCall, Jr., makes the case that the purpose of leadership research is to display its effectiveness or ineffectiveness and to point out areas for future research; and, finally, "Leadership Is a Language Game," by L. R. Pondy, explores the potential influence of leaders' language on their effectiveness. The document includes 4 lists of references and an annotated bibliography of 26 suggested readings. (RG)

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The Reconstruction of Leadership

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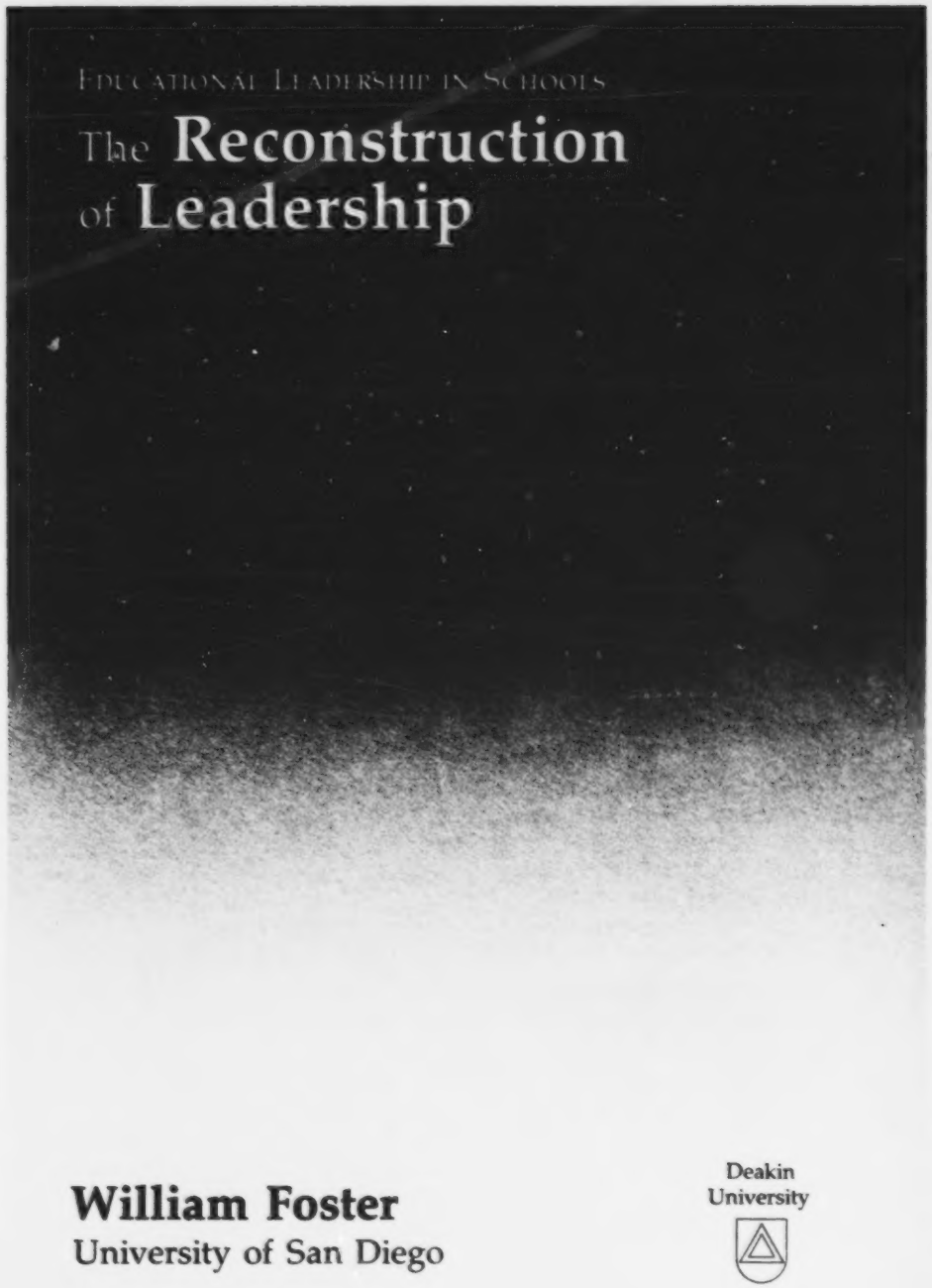

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Further titles may be added to this list from time to time.

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Series introduction

This monograph series on educational leadership is, in a sense, well overdue. The word 'leadership', with its attendant heroic and charismatic images, is probably one of the most written about, contested and least understood in the English language. This series has, therefore, set itself a considerable task in seeking to challenge traditional functionalist conceptualisations of leadership by exposing why they have been unhelpful. By adopting a 'critical' approach to power relationships and viewing these in the historical, social and cultural context of schooling, the authors move the debate away from the 'bureaucratic' to a more 'educative' view of what leadership might mean. If schools are to experience forms of leadership more compatible with openness and reciprocity, they will need to see how teaching and learning fit within larger networks of social control.

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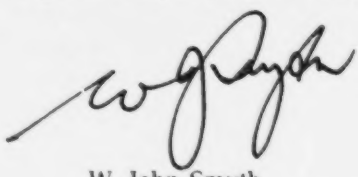

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The **reconstruction** of **leadership**

Introduction

Leadership is a construct which must be dismantled and rebuilt. The dismantling is necessary because it would appear that the future of leadership studies in social science research is bleak. Leadership has come to mean a variety of things, but the usual definition seems to consider leadership either a personal property or a property of position. In this paper, however, leadership is considered more a concept used to identify actions which yield social change and improvement. As such, leadership is a temporal property of the actor; it resides neither in the person nor in the situation. I would argue that, unlike the usual conceptions of leadership, leadership is a transient phenomenon, one which can be practised equally well by different social players, depending on the circumstances and the strength of ideas. Accordingly, leadership, as the term is used in this paper, will be differentiated according to whether we are considering the standard, hierarchical use of leadership or whether we see leadership as the consensual and mutual determination of possibilities. The first position is the dominant one, and has been supported, in a sense, by numerous and supposedly scientific studies of leadership behaviour.

The scientific study of leadership has essentially faltered, partly because the wrong phenomenon has been studied and partly because the functionalist paradigm that houses the studies has gone bankrupt. There is no doubt that social psychology has dominated leadership study in the past. The study of leadership has largely been the study of small-group dynamics, patterns of influence and uses of authority and domination. Hersey and Blanchard, for example, define leadership this way:

> Leadership is *the process of influencing the activities of an individual or a group in efforts toward goal achievement in a given situation* . . . the leadership process is a function of the *leader*, the *follower*, and other situational variables – $L = f(l,f,s)$.
>
> (Hersey & Blanchard 1977, p. 84)

This definition is widely shared (e.g. Owens 1981; Fiedler 1967; Blake & Mouton 1975) and, indeed, serves as the basis of a number of simplistic but profitable training programs. However, the definition remains an empty abstraction in so far as it fails to account for culture, politics and relations of power within both groups and organisations.

This charge might be demonstrated by reviewing briefly the status of hierarchical leadership research. Following Jago (1982), it can be seen that there have been at least four perspectives which have dominated heirarchical leadership study in this century. The

first perspective dealt with the traits that leaders supposedly possessed, such as intelligence, confidence, communicative ability, and so on. Not surprisingly, this line of research was not terribly fruitful, given the myriad characteristics possible as well as the dynamic and changing nature of leadership. Stogdill (in Bass 1981; original 1948) essentially killed the search for universal traits by finding that 'leadership is not a matter of passive status nor of the mere possession of some combination of traits' (Bass 1981, p. 68).

Abandoning the trait approach, leadership researchers turned toward a study of leader 'behaviours'. The studies carried out at the Ohio State University, starting in 1945, identified two factors which were suggested to be associated with leader behaviour: 'consideration' and 'initiation of structure'. Here, the emphasis turned to whether the leader was employee-centered, task-centered, or both, or neither. These studies spawned later managerial training programs designed to get managers to be rated 'high' on both production and consideration, though the effects of these training programs are clearly limited. As Jago (1982, p. 320) says, 'Managers can indeed be trained to behave in ways characteristic of high consideration and high initiating structure but the expected pay-offs from such training are not necessarily realized'. A major weakness, however, of the consideration-structure framework was that it simply did not offer explanatory power at an adequate level of generalisation. The assumption that managers could alter their behaviour to produce high levels of consideration and structure, and then *cause* some group outcome, is problematic at best.

The disappointment in the simple 2-factor model of leadership led to a third perspective in the mid-1960s (Hunt 1984). This was Fiedler's (1967) 'contingency' model of leadership, which has been reported as the most widely researched and most widely criticised framework for studying leadership (Bass 1981, p. 341). Fiedler made the assumption that individuals have a leadership 'style', and that the effectiveness of the leader in a particular situation will be 'contingent' on the match between style (whether, for example, one's style is task-oriented *or* relationship-oriented), the existing relationship between the leader and the group being led, the nature of the task (whether, for example, the task is unambiguous and clearly structured or not), and the position power of the leader (whether the leader has strong versus weak authority over the group). The interaction between these elements yielded, for Fiedler, eight combinations, or 'octants', so that it would be predicted that where leader-group relations were good, the task was structured and the position power was strong, then

the most effective leadership would come from a task-oriented individual. The same would hold true if the conditions were reversed; the relations-oriented person would only be effective when the favourableness of conditions was mixed. Fiedler's answer to leadership, then, was to insert the 'right' individual for the existing organisational conditions, or, barring that, to change the conditions themselves. This he calls the 'leader match concept' (Fiedler 1976).

Contingency theory and leadership match concepts are the subject of considerable dispute and by no means fully accepted constructs in the field. Indeed, the empirical findings are of doubtful value: 'In fact, when the relevant studies are critically examined, and a distinction drawn between those that constitute adequate tests of the model and those that do not, the results are far from encouraging' (Hosking & Schriesheim 1978, p. 500). In this same review of Fiedler, Chemers and Mahar's 1976 book on leadership effectiveness, Hosking and Schriesheim conclude:

> Despite the publisher's claims that the [contingency] model and leader match have been 'thoroughly validated', this is clearly nonsense. Given the severe problems noted . . . such a claim would almost be amusing, if it were not for the fact that some leaders may be injured by the application of leader match.
> (Hosking & Schriesheim 1978, p. 504)

Fiedler assumes that leadership 'style' is virtually unchanging; the fourth development in hierarchical leadership research takes issue with this. The two major models here are path-goal theory and the Vroom/Yetton model of decision making. Path-goal theory (House 1971) suggests that the function of the leader is to clarify for subordinates the paths available to achieving valued goals. The leader, that is, helps followers to achieve organisational goals by behaving in a manner contingent on the nature of the followers (need for direction, need for support, skill level) and the nature of the work-setting (clarity of procedures, type of task, group relations). The hierarchical leader then is concerned with structuring and consideration behaviour, adjusting his or her style in order to increase motivation and satisfy needs. Again, the empirical status of this model is equivocal; research results have been mixed (Bass 1981, pp. 446–7, Jago 1982, p. 326).

A final model representative of contemporary contingency approaches would be the Vroom/Yetton approach (Vroom & Yetton 1973). This model should not strictly be construed as a model of leadership; rather it is a prescriptive analysis of how decisions should be made by leaders. Using a decision tree, Vroom and Yetton develop five possible decision styles, ranging

from an autocratic, leader-decides, style to a participative, group-decides, style. The particular style chosen is a function of the needed quality of the decision, the need for group acceptance of the decision and the allotted time for making a decision. Thus, if the decision does not have a quality requirement and if subordinates are not involved in carrying out the decision, then the leader can confidently make the decision himself or herself. The style of the leader, in terms of participation, depends on the answer to several questions dealing with the three factors of quality, acceptance and time.

This model also has received some critical review, particularly with respect to the use of managers' self-reports when testing it and its inability to distinguish between what managers say they do and what they are perceived as doing by subordinates (Field 1979).

While there are a number of other theories and models of hierarchical leadership (e.g. reinforcement theory, exchange theory, attribution theory), this brief review of the four major developments in leadership research provides the flavour of the dominant approaches to understanding hierarchical leadership in this century. It can be seen that these approaches generally are concerned with group dynamics in the organisation, reflect leadership as a form of control and management, and have had inconsistent if not plain disappointing results.

It is clear that these approaches to leadership, grounded in an individualistic psychology, have not produced the results desired. Perrow observes that

> the research on leadership has left us with the clear view that things are far more complicated and 'contingent' than we initially believed, and that, in fact, they are so complicated and contingent that it may not be worth our while to spin out more and more categories and qualifications.
>
> (Perrow 1979, p. 115)

A review of Bass's (1981) expanded version of Stogdill's handbook on leadership shows over 3000 studies on leadership without any clear or undisputed pattern emerging. Bass himself, while nevertheless calling for larger samples and better measurement techniques, suggests that 'a review of the preceding [34] chapters suggests that some topics and research designs have been overworked while other important questions remain relatively unexplored' (Bass 1981, p. 616). This observation is particularly interesting in so far as Bass hoped in 1960 'to gather together some of what we now know about leadership and to organize this knowledge into a set of generalizations held together by reason as well as experiment' (Bass 1960, p.xi).

This quest has failed, in its efforts to develop positivistic models of leadership. A brief review of some of the leading theorists suggests this most clearly.

Bennis: 'The concept of leadership eludes us or turns up in another form to taunt us again with its slipperiness and complexity.' (1959, p. 260)

Stogdill: 'The endless accumulation of empirical data has not produced an integrated understanding of leadership.' (1974, p.vii)

Miner: 'The heresy I propose, is that the concept of leadership itself has outlived its usefulness.' (1975, p. 5)

Burns: 'Leadership as a concept has dissolved into small and discrete meanings . . . A superabundance of facts about leaders far outruns theories of leadership.' (1978, p. 2)

Dubin: 'By focusing on leaders' interpersonal relations with followers we have simply chosen a relatively trivial dimension while ignoring a major dimension of "leadership at a distance".'(1979, p. 227)

Jago: 'Although behavioral scientists have granted few topical areas greater research attention, the results of these efforts remain a bewildering mélange for even the most serious student of organizations.'(1982, p. 315)

McCall: 'After 40 years of accumulation, our mountain of evidence about leadership seems to offer few clear-cut facts. Most of the relative certainties deal with things that are *not* true, reflecting a tendency to hone our understanding of leadership by inadvertently finding out what it is not.' (1976, p. 142)

In short, the dominant means of studying hierarchical leadership has toppled under its own weight. It has produced little evidence and even less clarity. The dominant research framework, in time, has developed a particular language to talk about leadership: this language reflects essentially conservative concepts regarding influence, consideration, work-groups, tasks and so on, reifying the idea of leadership so that it becomes a thing possessed, and treating the issues of domination, dialectics and social meaningfulness as merely the babble of foreign tongues. The leadership idea should be reconstructed. The reconstruction is necessary not just because our research efforts bear little fruit. More than this, many observers see around them

crisis tendencies in social institutions (Habermas 1975) as well as a growing sense of frustration with political leadership. Robert Tucker, a professor of politics at Princeton, has, for example, suggested that 'a crisis of human survival is emerging' (1981, p. 114) and that 'never has the human occasion been piled so high with awful difficulty' (p. 157). Leadership is called for, without a doubt: but not the type of leadership which treats social structure as unproblematic, which becomes but a disguise for maintaining persistent patterns of exploitation, and which refuses to grapple with the tensions of freedom and equality, politics and economy. The leadership we envisage is a critical leadership, one founded in the idea of praxis. To investigate this, a new paradigm is needed.

Paradigms lost

The dominant paradigm which has guided social science research in North America, Australia and Britain has been labelled the functionalist framework. Functionalism includes the following (Burrell & Morgan 1979, pp. 25–8):

1. society is 'real' and guided by a consistent, core value structure;
2. knowledge is objective and amenable to 'discovery' by positivistic methodology; and
3. trained scientists stand above and beyond the data they observe.

It can be seen then that functionalism, with its incorporation of positivistic science models, has been the framework within which most hierarchical leadership studies have been conducted. Here, the leadership research assumes that leaders and followers operate within an uncontested and real social structure; a major function of hierarchical leadership is then the improvement of productive capability within that structure. Research on leadership is undertaken with the premise that continual refinement of instruments will yield more accurate data about the phenomenon being studied, and thus that at some point down the road an empirically justified picture of leadership behaviour will be developed.

There is, however, a growing dissatisfaction by orthodox researchers developing organisational theory and leadership constructs. Cummings (1981), for example, in an invited commentary on the future of organisational behaviour, has suggested that the important development in the future will be the contrast of conservative and radical paradigms. The conservative paradigm (labelled 'methodological' by Van de Ven & Astley 1981a) calls for the improvement of current research models by improving

construct validity, by more careful selection of variables, and by increasing use of sophisticated statistical techniques. The radical paradigm (labelled 'substantive' by Van de Ven & Astley 1981a, and see Van de Ven & Astley 1981b) turns to the examination of organisations (and leadership) as social constructions, the analysis of leadership as a symbolic force and the development of different levels of analysis.

Far from being a unified body of knowledge, organisational theory is really a diverse set of ideas rendered by conflict. Since leadership often occurs in an organisational context, it can be asserted that the ferment evident in organisational theory has certain and definite implications for the functionalist arguments of much of leadership research. Indeed, Mitroff (1978, p. 129) has generalised the problem by concluding that 'the social sciences are in great need of revolution . . . We have been following a brand of *physical* science that never really existed.' He goes on to argue against the reactive and reductionist nature of examining such concepts as leadership, and calls for a 'real dialectic': 'A real dialectic is when two equally plausible positions are tugging at your soul equally at the same time' (Mitroff 1978, p. 139). In other words, the paradigm that has guided much of the research into leadership has provided no dialectic at all. *The revolution in social science is the abandonment of the positivistic paradigm in favour of a dialectical framework which allows for a dynamic interpretation of human history and action*. The paradigm governing the understanding of leadership, then, must allow the endeavour to be conceptualised differently: it must allow for historical and hermeneutic approaches; it must abandon the search for quantified rigour; it must lose the reductionist and uncritical mentality of orthodox social science. As Pfeffer (1981, p. 416) has remarked: 'We need a critical organizational behavior, just as there has emerged a critical sociology. The sooner it emerges, the better'.

We can see, then, that functionalism as an inquiry system makes what are at best invalid assumptions about the nature of human life. Attempts to investigate universal human phenomena, using the functionalist approach, fail in so far as they cannot develop any adequate account of human action or intention. Studies of leadership, in the functionalist mode, must also suffer the same deficiencies and thereby give us an inadequate account of the concept.

Redefining leadership: Four attempts

The theories of leadership which have dominated social science can be dismissed largely on the basis of their non-reflective quality and their inclination to be substitutes for theories of management. More substantive theories of leadership, ones that indirectly address concerns expressed in the previous section, do exist, however. These theories can be seen to take a more politically active and morally defensible consideration of leadership. With one exception, they all tend to be newer formulations of leadership theory. While the expressions of leadership given in these works is hardly optimum from the perspective of critical reflection in an organisational context, they do take us closer to developing a hermeneutic view of leadership.

Selznick

Philip Selznick's (1957) book *Leadership in Administration* might be considered a classic in this genre. Selznick starts his consideration of hierarchical leadership by distinguishing it from management: the leader, in his view, is concerned with 'critical' as opposed to 'routine' decisions in the organisation. Critical decisions have to do with the definition of the purpose of the organisation (see, in this regard, Vail's 1984 related concept of 'purposing'). The definition of purpose, for Selznick (1957, p.135), is not simply the linkage of means to ends: 'The cult of efficiency in administrative theory and practice is a modern way of overstressing means and neglecting ends'. Nor is it concerned with human relations efforts designed to develop a 'harmonious team'. Leadership, thus, is not equivalent to office-holding; rather, it is concerned with statesmanship, and therefore 'the institutional leader . . . *is primarily an expert in the promotion and protection of values*' (Selznick 1957, p. 28). Later, the question of whose values are being promoted will be addressed, but for now we can see that Selznick artfully avoids the trap of abstract empiricism in his approach to leadership.

This is evident in his description of three premises about leadership. These become generative ideas for his conceptualisation of leadership (Selznick 1957, pp. 22-5).

'1. *Leadership is a kind of work done to meet the needs of a social situation*' (p. 22). This is to say that leadership can involve the interaction of leaders and organisation or institution. He notes, though, that 'it does not follow that the *nature* of leadership varies with each social situation. If that were so, there would be nothing

determinate about it; its study would be a scientific blind alley' p. 23), a conclusion we have reached again almost three decades later.

'2. *Leadership is not equivalent to office-holding or high prestige or authority or decision-making*' (p. 24). Leadership may be exerted by those in positions of authority; then again, it may not.

'3. *Leadership is dispensable*' (p. 24). The idea developed here is that not everything that occurs in an institution can be called 'leadership'; there are social processes which occur without any need for leadership.

So Selznick's approach abstracts leadership as a construct which explains certain human action in the organisation, emphasising in particular the maintenance or transmittal of values which steer the direction of the institution.

Burns

Burns (1978) takes this theme further. Burns sees leadership 'as a special form of power' (p. 12) and power as the motivated utilisation of resources to achieve certain goals. Power, however, is not interpreted in any mechanical sense, nor is it always coercive: 'the most powerful influences consist of deeply human relationships in which two or more persons *engage* with one another' (Burns 1978, p. 11). For Burns, power is a basic aspect of humanity, and occurs in practically all relationships where there are motivations and resources. Power need not be 'power over', but can reflect a host of motivations, for example, the motive to achieve as opposed to the motive to dominate. Leadership, in this formulation, is a form of power. *'Leadership over human beings'*, Burns writes (1978, p. 18), *'is exercised when persons with certain motives and purposes mobilize, in competition or conflict with others, institutional, political, psychological, and other resources so as to arouse, engage, and satisfy the motives of followers'*.

This definition needs some explanation. First, of course, power may be exercised over things (and people as objects)– leadership is not. Leadership, next, is purposive; it is oriented toward a goal, a vision, a change. It is also political, involving competition and/or conflict over scarce resources. Finally, this definition accepts followers as having motives of their own– motives which can be exposed or tapped by leaders. This definition thus has advantages over the ones examined in the first section: motivations of individuals are taken into account; the political process involved in using resources is considered; and followers are given a bit of life, not shown as simply the reactive

robots of normal managerial theory. 'Leadership, unlike naked power-wielding, is thus inseparable from followers' needs and goals' (Burns 1978, p. 19).

Burns's major contribution, though, seems to be his distinction between *types* of leadership. In his reformulation, Burns claims that leadership may be classified as 'transactional' and 'transformational'. Transactional leadership involves exchanges – the leader and the followers are engaged in the exchange of some valued goods – such as the exchange of votes for particular programs on the part of politicians and the electorate. Transactional leaders, for Burns, may be found in group leadership (such as small groups); in opinion leadership, the marketplace of wants and preferences; in party leadership (political parties); and in legislative leadership and executive leadership. Transactional leadership might then be considered the 'normal' expression of leadership in society, in so far as somebody with an idea and a motive uses various mechanisms to convince others to exchange their support for his or her value.

A transformational leader is somewhat different. A transformational leader does not simply engage in an exchange of valued goods: he or she engages the followers and transforms the followers' vision of the world. The transforming leader 'is moral but not moralistic. Leaders engage with followers, but from higher levels of morality; in the enmeshing of goals and values both leaders and followers are raised to more principled levels of judgment . . . Much of this kind of elevating leadership asks sacrifices *from* followers rather than merely promising them goods' (Burns 1978, p. 455). Transforming leadership can occur as intellectual leadership, using ideas to transform; reform leadership, reforming particular structures of governance; revolutionary leadership, as occured with Mao Tse-Tung in China; and heroic leadership and ideological leadership, the use of charisma and dominative ideas to sway followers. It follows from this that 'essentially the leader's task is consciousness-raising on a wide plane' (Burns, 1978, pp. 43–4).

Tucker

Tucker (1981) criticises Burns's work in that, firstly, Burns rules out by definition political leadership which is coercive or dictatorial (such as Stalin and Hitler), preferring to see it not as leadership but as power wielding, and secondly, 'Burns's view bypasses the key question of what it is that leaders do, or how they function as leaders, apart from interacting motivationally with

followers' (Tucker 1981, p. 12). Tucker's answer to the first point is to see politics itself as leadership, where politics is considered as the active direction of a political community and can be thus equated with leadership. Politics, in this view, is not simply power-seeking, though it can involve power. Thus dictators can exert political leadership which is power-based and power-seeking. This then raises the question of what it is that political leaders do. Tucker's answer lies in the development of three interlocking phases:

> First, leadership has a diagnostic function. Leaders are expected to define the situation authoritatively for the group. Second, they must prescribe a course of group action, or of action on the group's behalf, that will meet the situation as defined . . . Third, leadership has a mobilizing function . . . We may describe these functions as diagnostic, policy formulating, and policy implementing.
>
> (Tucker 1981, pp. 18,19)

Leadership, for Tucker, can be seen to involve activities which are political in nature and which are responses to a problem situation. Like Selznick, routine situations are considered administrative in nature. Tucker thus provides us with an activity-based analytical scheme for examining the leadership of political events.

Bennis

Another study of leadership worth noting is Bennis's (1983) study of chief executives and hierarchical leaders. Here, unlike the previous scholars, Bennis focuses on leadership in the firm. His study does, however, reinforce some of Burns's and Tucker's conclusions. Bennis (1984, p. 66) finds that his leaders shared *vision*, a clarification of the present and a view of the future; *communication and alignment*, communicating and gaining support for the vision; *persistence, consistency and focus*, maintaining the vision in the organisation; *empowerment*, creating a 'social architecture' which allows for the expression of energy; and *organisational learning*, the ability to monitor performance and learn from errors.

The combination of these factors provides what he calls 'transformative power', the ability to *'translate an intention into reality and sustain it'* (Bennis 1984, p. 64). Bennis nicely sums up the newer approach to leadership studies:

> In sum, the transformative power of leadership stems less from ingeneously crafted organizational structures, carefully constructed management designs and controls, elegantly

> rationalized planning formats, or skillfully articulated leadership tactics. Rather, it is the ability of the leader to reach the souls of others in a fashion which raises human consciousness, builds meanings, and inspires human intent that is the source of power. Within transformative leadership, therefore, it is vision, purposes, beliefs, and other aspects of organizational culture that are of prime importance.
>
> (Bennis 1984, p. 70)

Bennis thus stresses the symbolic quality of leadership in the organisation.

These four studies of leadership have much in common. Firstly, they see leadership as an interactive process which unfolds in its demonstration, not as a birthright or possession of some sort. Moreover, the process is largely political in nature, in so far as it deals with either the transfer of resources or the definition of a just community. More pragmatically, politics is included in its dimensions of negotiations, conflicts, and interest groups and coalitions. The leaders and the followers exist in a political tension. The studies also take note of the symbolic significance of leadership. Leadership, for Burns, can be transforming; for Bennis, transformative. All the studies, to one degree or another, make the symbolic dimension a major part of their investigation. The studies also have a weak but implied social critique: leadership is expressed as the diagnosis of situations, or as the transformation of structures, implying the inadequacy of present arrangements. The studies are also sweeping in their scope. This is politics informed by history, a grand view of events and causality. While there might be a tendency to hagiography in some, the net effect is to illuminate and demonstrate the scope of actors in the unfolding of history.

While these four studies are a definite advance over the functionalist approaches to leadership, in so far as they attempt to account for political and social action in more than objectivistic terms, they still contain an implicitly hierarchical definition of leadership which abstracts leadership as a property possessed by some individuals. In so doing they do not approach the essence of leadership; they fail in the development of a critical spirit, which, in turn, is necessary for leadership to understand the context of its surroundings; and they treat leadership as a volunteeristic trait, where one simply chooses to exert leadership.

While there is talk of raising human consciousness, creating meanings and elevating motives and goals, it is clear that these take place within a taken-for-granted social structure. The structure remains in the background while the players are on

stage – the studies are imbued with a kind of optimistic acceptance of what stands behind them, even while demonstrating the potential and need for change. Again, the context of social development is lacking. Consider, in this regard, Rosen's comments:

> The historical record indicates that the development of society generally involves a movement from the small-scale societies anthropologists usually term *simple* or *primitive* to the complex nation-states of the modern world. Broadly speaking, *this movement has been characterized by increasing economic and social inequality in nearly every sphere of life*. Thus, the watershed of complex society has been the development systems of caste, class, bureaucratic, and sexual stratification unknown or muted in simple systems. Paralleling this the development of leadership systems is equally clear: leadership systems have tended to become increasingly closed, ascribed, and power based.
>
> (Rosen 1984, p. 43)

While Rosen does argue that modern capitalism creates a decentralised economy which in turn acts to present a centralised, coercive and authoritarian, political leadership from emerging, it can nevertheless be seen that the *context* of emergent leadership is important, and that those studies which fail to fully grasp this are missing an essential element of political discourse. As far as the literature has gone, clearly what is needed is a *critical politics* of leadership, one which can deal with *organisational structure* and which provides a different paradigm for considering leadership. A new paradigm or framework will not just look at functions of leadership, nor just at individuals who demonstrated leadership. A new paradigm must include within it an analysis of *leadership in organisations and a critical vision* of the future. While these four studies talk about politics, they are essentially apolitical; while they talk about vision, they are essentially located in the past.

Leadership in organisations

Effective leadership *in* organisations thus begins with some perspective *on* organisations. 'Formal organisations', Brown (1978, p. 371) tells us, 'are essentially processes of organizing enacted by persons'. This is to say that an organisation is a negotiated environment, though negotiated from positions of unequal status, power and authority. The organisation, must be addressed in terms of *enactment*, *power* and *structure*.

Enactment is a concept Weick (1969) has used to suggest the ways in which organisational members construct and negotiate the

'reality' of the organisation. It would include such concepts as role definition and acceptance and the affirmation of the symbolic universe within which the organisational actors operate. Enactment requires the organisational member to make sense of the organisation; that is, to join in the conventional cultural and normative processes, to carve out a meaningful place. It is in this sense that the rationality of the organisation is a *post hoc* interpretation of events: rationality 'turns out to be an achievement – a symbolic product that is constructed through actions that in themselves are nonrational' (Brown 1978, p. 370). The organisation itself becomes a paradigm (Brown 1978) which incorporates rules of action, including a rule requiring the application of rationality to events.

Enactment, as has been discussed so far, appears as a theory of micro-psychology. To leave it there would be a mistake. Enactment occurs in the context of historically constituted social processes: it is a dialectic between the material and the ideal. Giddens (1979), for example, observes that *all* social conduct involves the interplay of the basic conditions which frame the action, the rationalisation by actors of what they do, and the consequences (perhaps not intended) of their actions.

The dialectical interplay between these conditions yields structure; yet structure 'is both medium and outcome of the reproduction of practices. Structure enters simultaneously into the constitution of the agent and social practices, and "exists" in the generating moments of the constitution' (Giddens 1979, p. 5). This seems to mean that structure in organisations can be seen *both* as a feature of individuals interacting and as an outcome of such an interaction.

Organisations exhibit structure, but it is what Clegg (1981, p. 550) labels 'structure-in-process', a structure perceived as real and historically reproduced by the actions of organisational members. Enactment, therefore, is not *de novo*; it occurs within the paradigmatic confines of the dynamics of power, class and ideological consciousness. Another way of stating this is to say that organisations restrict alternatives – they impose a system of control on members' outlooks which originates in the political and economic relations of the modern state.

This, however, is to reify organisations somewhat. A better formulation is to say that organisational structures are composed of individuals who can be located within differential power structures and who represent historically notable distinctions of control. Power thus becomes a dominant feature of organisational life. 'Power in organizations', using Clegg's (1979, p. 123) words, 'derives from

control of the means and methods of production'. Control over production is reinforced by what Clegg (1979) terms 'sedimented rules', in particular, technical rules governing the nature of labour in relation to production, and socio-regulative rules involving the 'reconstruction of social solidarity' in organisations (Clegg 1981, p. 553).

Thus, the structure of organisations becomes a dialectical process wherein basic relations of power are confirmed through sedimented rules which are absorbed through what might be considered ideological rituals in the workplace. This becomes the paradigmatic reality for organisational members. Scientific management, on the one hand, and human relations, on the other, become ideological systems for the construction of, respectively, technical and socio-regulative rules (Clegg 1979) which reflect the distribution of power. Enactment, power and structure are central features of organisational reality; paradoxically, hierarchical leadership can thus be seen as a way of confirming historical organisational relations, rather than as a means of emancipation.

This is not to say that hierarchical leadership will act to reproduce historical structures, and, indeed, this, in a functionalist analysis, is why we need leadership at all. The major point is that strategies of domination *can* be analysed and thereby provide the 'ground' upon which political battles are fought. Thus, power can be contested, and the contestation can result in the commonly observed strategies of coalition building, collective bargaining and other political activity. These, often, take place within the context of the dominant organisational paradigm rather than disputing the paradigm itself:

> In hierarchical organizations (or in a bureaucratized society) it is not only the means of economic production that become concentrated, but also the means of theoretical reflection . . . There comes to be not only a concentration of control over the contents of reality (the means of production), but also over the definition of reality (i.e. foundational assumptions concerning what constitutes 'property', 'rights', 'obligations', 'legitimacy', and so on).
>
> (Brown 1978, p. 376)

In education, as one example, there is control over the structures of work – time and space limitations placed on teachers – as well as over the basic concepts of what 'teaching' is, what 'knowledge' is, and who 'students' are. The politics of education tends to challenge one – the means of production – but not the other – the definitions of reality. But this is not to say that it cannot. Brown concludes his observations by saying:

> We all create worlds. The more we are able to create worlds that are morally cogent and politically viable, the more we are able, as workers and as citizens, to manage or to resist.
>
> (Brown 1978, p. 378)

The re-creation of new worlds, though, requires the development of a dialectic of theory and praxis, of a critically reflective commitment, of a different sort of leadership. It requires abandoning functionalist and related paradigms and looking at leadership in more historical, biographical, organisational and political terms.

The praxis of leadership

The argument put forth suggests that leadership acts are certainly involved with the redefinition of reality and the creation of alternatives, but that this occurs in the context of a social world that displays patterns of domination. Thus, any consideration given to leadership as a construct must incorporate an analysis of context, which in this case is equivalent to an analysis of the economic, political and cultural relations of modern societies. Another way of saying this is that *praxis* can become a unifying concept for leadership studies.

Praxis is the recognition that theory must eventually be located in 'sensuous human activity'. The test of theory is its eventual relevance to improving the human condition: 'Through practice and labour the human species synthesizes and alters the material world and thereby transforms nature *qua* known as well as itself' (Held 1980, p. 190). Praxis is politics, but politics in a classical sense, not as theory interpreting the immutable scheme of events, nor as 'techne', developing specific skills of action. Rather, politics becomes the search for a just and equal state and praxis is transformative action which will yield this. Praxis, in this respect, stands for the ability of all persons to engage in acts of leadership which help in the transformation to a way of life which incorporates participative principles; leadership, in this regard, is both a critical and a shared leadership. It is shared because no one individual has the right way: rather leadership is a communal endeavour wherein the direction of the society is discussed and debated. Leadership, in this respect, resides in actions and acts, not in persons or positions. But each act must also have a critical audience. The critical spirit is the basis for leadership acts. Grob discusses this:

> In pointing to the critical spirit as the ground of all leadership, my intent has been to argue that without that willingness to examine

> one's life, alleged leaders in any and all areas of human endeavor must, of necessity, become identified with their purposes, purposes which inevitably congeal into fixed doctrines or dogma. In short, potential leaders *without this ground* find themselves in the service of fixed ideas or causes, and thus agents of the use of power in their behalf. *No longer nourished by a wellspring of critical process at its center, leadership 'dries up' and becomes, finally, the mere wielding of power on behalf of static ideals*
>
> (Grob 1984, pp. 270–1)

Leadership in this view must be conceived as critical reflection, critical action within the dialectic of enactment, structure, and power.

With this in mind, some propositions concerning leadership may be suggested. These propositions are based on the idea of emancipatory leadership, one that deals with organisational enactment, power and structure.

Firstly, *leadership involves the demystification (penetration) of structure*. This is to claim that leaders make problematic 'the way things are'. If we construct social reality, we also look back on our construction and say that *that* is now objective and real, that *that* is the way it has been, will be, and should be. In other words we build a consciousness, sometimes false, held together by shared myths, rituals and symbols. It is, as Berger and Luckmann (1971, p. 78) put it, 'the paradox that man is capable of producing a world that he then experiences as something other than a human product'. But the created structure and the sedimented rules can be penetrated:

> To understand the state of the socially constructed universe at any given time, or its change over time, one must understand the social organization that permits the definers to do their defining. Put a little crudely, it is essential to keep pushing questions about the historically available conceptualizations of reality from the abstract 'What?' to the sociologically concrete 'Says who?'
>
> (Berger & Luckman 1971, p. 134)

Secondly, *leadership involves being politically critical and critically educative*. If our social world is constructed, and not handed to us as objectively real, then our 'world' is one of many possible worlds, and praxis the antidote to historical determinism. The recognition of alternative models, however, requires being politically critical. Gramsci (1971) used the terms 'domination' and 'hegemony' to describe a social situation in which power is maintained both through 'force and consent'. Force resides in the ultimately coercive police power of the state; hegemony, though,

can be thought of as an ongoing ideological control which is 'taken for granted' by social members. With social hegemony, force is unnecessary. Hegemony can be said to occur when certain groups have unequal power over other groups, and benefit from this inequality, *and* this situation is presented as right and normal, historically divined. Contradictions which occur in the relations of groups (e.g. talking about the virtues of participation in an authoritarian hierarchy) are made opaque though they often surface.

Hegemony occurs in the reification of conditions of employment. Clegg (1979, p. 95; Ch.6 offers a full discussion of Gramsci) finds that 'hegemony in the factory is born out of specific practices devised by the intellectual cadre of the factory and mediated by management. This cadre is that of the administrative and organization sciences'. The same might be said of schools. Taylorism, for example, could be analysed as an intellectual system about the nature of work, adopted by school administrators, placed in the school, and legitimated by intellectuals in 'administrative science'. The process continues as intellectuals 'discover' human relations, management-by-objectives or situational leadership. The intellectuals legitimate the practical use of the technique at hand, thereby masking structures of control, manipulation or domination. For students, the development of IQ tests and other sorting devices are examples of the process at work.

Hegemony too can be resisted and penetrated, through the same kind of intellectual process, but one that is critically informed. It requires the critical analysis of what Ramos (1981, p. 76) has labelled 'cognitive politics', the 'conscious or unconscious use of distorted language, the intent of which is to induce people to interpret reality in terms that reward the direct and/or indirect agents of such distortion'. Advertising designed to manipulate consumer preference is an obvious example, but the propagation of various management and leadership systems could as well serve. Critical politics is then the analysis of hegemonic systems which serve, in the end, a poltitical function – the diversion of resources and power to some group at the expense of others and at the expense of emancipatory core values. Critical politics is concerned with the question 'Who benefits, who suffers?'.

But leadership also involves being critically educative. While we can say that being politically critical takes place on a largely analytic level, being critically educative involves the merger of analysis and practice. Fay (1975, 1977) has proposed a 'critical

social science', as opposed to a positivist science and a solely interpretive social science. Within his proposal for critical social science, he develops the proposition that, firstly, theory can change practice, and secondly, this can occur through an educative model. The educative model essentially engages in critical analysis and then educates members concerning the conditions of their surroundings. Fay says:

> According to this educative conception, the function of the social scientist is not to provide knowledge of quasi-causal laws to a policy scientist who will determine which social conditions are to be manipulated in order to effect a particular goal, but rather *to enlighten the social actors so that, coming to see themselves and their social situation in a new way, they themselves can decide to alter the conditions which they find repressive*. In other words, the social scientist tries to 'raise the consciousness' of the actors whose situation he is studying.
>
> (Fay 1975, p. 103)

This is similar in conception to Freire's notion of leadership and praxis: 'dialogue with the people' (1974, p. 120). It makes the assertion that knowledge of conditions can expose sources of repression and lead to a change in conditions. As Moon (1982, p. 176) says, 'To the extent that the occurrence of certain social processes depends upon the ignorance of the participants in those processes, the knowledge that results from political inquiry would cause those proceses to be altered in potentially fundamental ways'. Because of this potential, political analysis is a 'commitment to human freedom' (Moon 1982, p. 151).

The educative model that Fay develops need not, as the passage implies, be limited to social scientists. Instead, we can appropriate the model for leadership: that is, a responsibility of leadership lies in critical education. Further, critical education involves the notion of power, but not 'power-over' but 'power-to'. The leader, in this instance, must have intellectual power-to-analyse and power-to-criticise, and dialogic power-to-present. *The educative use of power is realised in the empowerment of followers*, an empowerment which provides the actors themselves with insight and reflection into the conditions of their existence and into the possibilities for change. The danger, of course, for the leader is to confuse power-to with power-over, and in so doing deny the empowerment of the followers. The empowerment of followers through the educative process is accomplished through penetration, through challenge, through presentation of alternative universes. Kegan and Lahey, though adopting a too conservative view, provide an appropriate summary of educative empowerment:

> But people do not *grow* by having their realities only confirmed. They grow by having them challenged, as well, and being supported to listen to, rather than defend against, that challenge. We defined *leadership* as the exercise of authority. But a person whose way of being in the world – in a family, at work, or as a citizen – amounts to the exercise of authority *on behalf of facilitating the development* of those around him or her, is the person who can truly be called a leader.
>
> (Kegan & Lahey 1984, p. 226)

Leadership, though, is more than this, but this also is fundamental.

Thirdly, *leadership is conditioned on language*. It should be clear that the demystification of structure and the critically political and educative dimensions of leadership are based on language. They involve, in turn, an analysis of leadership as language and of communication which can be distorted. Pondy (1978) takes us into an analysis of leadership as a 'language game', suggesting that there is a parallel between leadership and the type of generative grammar we use to create new and previously unsaid sentences. Leadership thus is the ability 'to make sense of things *and* to put them into language meaningful to large numbers of people . . .' (Pondy 1978, p. 95). But it goes deeper than this. One also has to examine leadership not only as communication but also as distorted and undistorted communication.

Habermas has done seminal work in this area (1975, 1979). He begins by distinguishing purposive-rational action from communicative interaction. The former can be considered labour, expressed in the ability to shape and control nature and guided by instrumentalities. The latter, however, is communication which is intersubjectively arrived at, and guided by norms, values and rules. Communicative interaction constitutes meaning and understanding, and the daily practice can be better understood through the development of an 'ideal speech situation'. Habermas (1979, p. 1) starts from 'the assumption . . . that other forms of social action – for example, conflict, competition, strategic action in general – are derivatives of action oriented to reaching understanding . . . '. This assumption is grounded in the characteristics of ideal speech – that an individual, in speaking, is also making the following claims:

> a. *Uttering* something understandably;
> b. Giving [the hearer] *something* to understand;
> c. Making *himself* thereby understandable; and
> d. Coming to an understanding *with another person*.
>
> (Habermas 1979, p. 2)

Ideally, the reciprocal and intersubjective nature of communication implies underlying norms which govern communicative action. That is, speaking, hearing and coming to a meaningful understanding of what is said implies, firstly, that what is said is comprehensible; secondly, that what is said is true (not deceptive); thirdly, that it is said in a spirit of truth; and fourthly, that it is right or appropriate to say it. Thus embodied in an ideal speech situation are norms of truth, rightness and fairness. These distinguish an undistorted communicative process from a distorted one.

The ideal therefore serves as a critical standard for judging the real, and, as the previous discussion has illustrated, organisational and historical forms of repression can enter into the distortion of language. Leadership, then, is the analysis of the conditions which lead to distorted communication, e.g. hierarchical organisational structures which penalise individuals for 'speaking their mind'.

The implication, of course, is that leadership must occur within the context of democratic participation – that leadership involves the rational discussion of arguments, the elucidation of conditions, and the illumination of possibility: discovering through communication the 'what' that is and the 'what' that is not.

In a real sense, leadership as language analysis is an attempt to uncover the political uses of language (see, in this regard, Mueller 1973). Structures of domination are perpetuated through a linguistic cover-up which says 'things' are when they are not, or are not when they are.

To illustrate this we can turn to Edelman's important book, *Political Language* (1977). Edelman shows how basic issues of social welfare, such as poverty, crime, housing policies, and so on, are structurally located in a system of economic inequality, but that, rather than deal with this, a symbolic, political language evolves to conceal the problem and to maintain a social elite which benefits from wealth inequality. Edelman tells us initially:

> In politics, as in religion, whatever is ceremonial or banal strengthens reassuring beliefs regardless of their validity and discourages skeptical inquiry about disturbing issues. From the beginnings of recorded history to the present day, governments have won the support of large numbers of their citizens for policies that were based upon delusions: beliefs in witches, in nonexistent internal and external enemies, or in the efficacy of laws to regulate private power, cope with destitution, guarantee civil rights, or rehabilitate criminals that have often had the opposite effect from their intended ones.
>
> (Edelman 1977, p. 3)

Governments and government agencies thus use language in distorted ways to support policies that do not and cannot work. Language is used to classify and to define; thus, several government agencies are established to deal with 'distinct' social problems, such as poverty, crime, ineffective education, drug abuse, mental illness (Edelman 1977, p. 26). Such a linguistic labelling defines the problems as separate *and* treatable, treatable through different specialists and agencies (drug 'counsellors', helping professions, 'wars' on poverty, etc.). But, 'this premise is simplistic and distorting because all of these problems can be seen as flowing largely from the functioning of economic institutions. If economic institutions functioned without unemployment, poorly paid work, degrading work, or inadequate industrial pension and health programs, there would be manifestly very little poverty' (Edelman 1977, p. 27).

The categorisation, the labelling, the distortion of social structure through the distortion of communication is not limited to programs and policies but reaches the very core of what we are. To quote Edelman a last time:

> In an age of technological achievement it is the symbol of science that works. A call for the 'adjusted' individual rationalizes the most repressive stultification of the human spirit, for in learning to conform, people are taught to see themselves as undergoing a cure; and if they have doubts, their counselors, doctors, and trainers reassure them that they will indeed benefit from rehabilitation.
>
> Many people do experience severe suffering, stress, desperation, and bewilderment. Help and support are necessary. *But personal dilemmas are not 'deviance' unless authorities call them that. The labeling of deviance wins popular support for controls that are the negation of support and help.*
>
> (Edelman 1977, p. 153: my emphasis)

If, then, leadership acts have a part to play in the human condition, that part must address the ways and the means by which repressive policies, and consequent structures, are legitimated through linguistic distortion, a distortion which serves the needs of the powerful by maintaining conditions of inequality *and* winning uninformed public support for discriminatory policy.

Leadership acts, then, serve as a construct to encapsulate a variety of actions on the part of different and many individuals, but all orientated toward the idea of praxis—obtaining more just conditions for all of us who wish to persevere in fulfilling democratic relationships.

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Readings

READING 1

Leadership: The Socratic model

L. Grob

SOURCE

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Western philosophers have never been silent on the question of leadership. From Plato's philosopher-king to Machiavelli's prince, from Hobbes's sovereign to Nietzsche's *Übermensch*, philosophy has said its piece on the nature of the ideal leader. But it is not my purpose in this chapter to merely survey the range of philosophical opinions on leadership—opinions, it may be noted, which largely address questions of *political* leadership. To do so would be to depict a history of ideas at the expense of inquiring into the nature of the unique disciplinary perspective on leadership offered by the philosopher qua philosopher. The issue to be addressed in these pages is the determination of that peculiar reflection on leadership which, I will argue, is demanded by the philosopher's vocation as such.

Where must such a quest begin? The endeavor to locate a truly philosophical perspective on leadership in any historical consensus on the essence of leadership is certain to fail. It is clear to even the beginning student of philosophy that the great thinkers of the West—and here we will address only a few representative thinkers in this tradition—are far from agreement with regard to a depiction of the nature of the ideal leader. For Plato, writing in the fourth century B.C., Athens, the authority by virtue of which the philosopher-king rules the state, is an authority derived from his knowl-

edge of the one Truth. What distinguishes the ideal leader from his followers, in other words, is the possession by the former of "wisdom," of an "intellectual vision" informing the principles of government, as it informs the principles of human conduct in general. "*Until . . . political greatness and wisdom meet in one,*" Plato exclaims in his *Republic*, "*and those commoner natures who pursue either to the exclusion of the other are compelled to stand aside, cities will never have rest from their evils—no, nor the human race, as I believe. . . .*"[1] Although the presence of the philosopher-king does not in itself guarantee the realization of the state as the embodiment of absolute justice, it is nonetheless true that without the guidance of *one who knows the essence of justice*, the state is doomed to be ruled in an arbitrary, ultimately capricious fashion.

It is the inevitably arbitrary character of the rule of popular leaders which prompts Plato's utter scorn for all so-called democratic principles of government. Those alleged leaders chosen either by lot or by virtue of the persuasiveness of their oratory are, for Plato, no leaders at all. Like those mutineers—described in Book VI of the *Republic*—who take charge of a ship without knowledge of the pilot's art, the practitioners of democracy necessarily bar the way to a realization of the genuine "ship of state." Just as the mutineers forget "that the true pilot must pay attention to the year and seasons and sky and stars and winds, and whatever else belongs to his art . . . and that he must and will be the steerer, whether other people like or not . . . ,"[2] so the populace, the demos, forgets that only the philosopher is equipped to direct the course of the state, that only by a knowledge of the form of the ideal state can the leader rightfully exercise his leadership.

Whereas Plato's political philosophy is based on a distinction between a real and an ideal world, the analyses of the Renaissance philosopher Niccolo Machiavelli, and the seventeenth-century thinker Thomas Hobbes, are securely rooted in a view of how human beings do, in fact, behave. Thus, for Machiavelli, political philosophy finds its proper ground in conclusions to be drawn from the comparative analyses of past modes of government: "But my intention being to write something of use to those who understand, it appears to me more proper to go to the real truth of the matter than to its imagination . . . for how we live is so far removed from how we ought to live, that he who abandons what is done for what ought to be done, will rather learn to bring about his own ruin than his preservation."[3] What the study of history teaches Machiavelli is that if political anarchy is to be avoided, moral considerations must be subordinated to the mechanics of a struggle for power. Thus neither moral nor immoral conduct is to be cultivated for its own sake. Given the dictates of the circumstances at hand, the leader must be prepared to employ any and all means in the service of his sole end: the establishment, maintenance, and continued welfare of the state in his charge.

The necessity of establishing a "prince," a strong ruler, as head of state is determined not only by the lessons learned from political history but by an analysis of human nature as well. For Machiavelli all human beings are motivated by the desire for power. In the midst of inevitable conflict among individuals so motivated, the leader is one who succeeds best at the game of power in which all are involved. The Machiavellian prince is thus moved by the same passions as his subjects; his leadership consists in his superior ability to wield instruments of physical and psychological force in the process of establishing order among those who would otherwise destroy themselves as a political entity. "The only way to establish any kind of order," Machiavelli concludes in his *Discourses*, "is to establish some superior power which, with a royal hand, and with full and absolute powers, may put a curb upon the excessive ambition and corruption of the power."[4]

The theme of the leader as guarantor of the integrity of the state is taken up and given a new turn by Hobbes in his *Leviathan*, published in 1654. Here the sovereign emerges by the consent of followers who wish to establish their places in a political order but who, by virtue of their bellicose, appropriative natures, cannot succeed on their own in so doing. Hence the erection of a "common power" to whom authority is granted so that the people may be compelled to behave according to what is ultimately their true self-interest: "For by this authority, given him by every particular man in the commonwealth, he hath the use of so much power and strength . . . that by terror thereof, he is enabled to form the wills of them all. . . ."[5]

Unlike Machiavelli, Hobbes does not base his philosophy of leadership in any fundamental sense on the observable data to be gleaned from a history of governments. When he speaks of a "natural state of war" preceding the establishment of a political order, Hobbes proceeds according to a deductively determined sequence of philosophical assumptions: if humans are ruled by their passions for self-preservation and self-aggrandizement, and if the play of these passions leads to the "war of all against all," then such self-interest—coupled with a natural ability to reason—leads inevitably to the erection of a sovereign power, the sole center around which a political body can take form. In Hobbes's words, the transfer of power takes place by means of a ". . . covenant of every man with every man, in such manner, as if every man should say to every man, *I authorize and give up my right of governing myself, to this man, or to this assembly of men, on this condition, that thou give up thy right to him, and authorize all his actions in like manner.*"[6] The fact that such a covenant establishes the very concept of sovereignty in the name of all present and future subjects ensures the preservation of the sovereign as the locus of a power which is nothing short of absolute.

With the thought of Friedrich Nietzsche in the late nineteenth century, the philosophy of leadership again turns toward prescriptive rather than

descriptive analysis. The Nietzschean *Übermensch*, the "superman," is a leader by dint of his unique ability to transcend what had been thought to be a given human nature: "I teach you the superman. Man is something that should be overcome. . . . What is great in man is that he is a bridge and not a goal. . . ."[7] As the embodiment of this awareness, the *Übermensch* leads by creating ever-new values to replace the ones destroyed in his "overcoming" of the previous ethical, religious, and political order. The leader, in Nietzschean terms, heralds nothing short of an ongoing, radical transformation of society in all of its dimensions.

The Nietzschean superman, therefore, is not to be characterized by the possession of any determinate set of leadership attributes. The *Übermensch*, rather, is the embodiment of an ever-renewed desire to move beyond all fixed attributes in an eternally creative act of transcendence. As the guide urging us to "dance beyond ourselves," the superman is not ultimately to be identified with any one person in the history of humankind:

> There has never yet been a Superman. I have seen them both naked, the greatest and the smallest man.
>
> They are still all-too-similar to one another. Truly, I have found even the greatest man—all-too-human![8]

In thus provoking us to surpass the "merely human" in any and all epochs—and particularly the "merely human" representative of Christian morality who dominates our present age—the *Übermensch* serves ultimately as the image of the ideal leader.

What are we—given over to the task of discovering a fundamentally philosophical perspective on leadership—to make of the wide divergence of ideas on leadership to be found even in our very brief excursus into the history of Western thought? To which philosophers, to which set of theoretical overviews should our inquiry turn if it is to discover that fundamental disciplinary perspective on leadership of which it is in search? If, as Alfred North Whitehead contends, "European philosophy is founded upon Plato's dialogues,"[9] and if, as Martin Heidegger proclaims, Socrates is "the purest thinker in the west,"[10] then it is to the Socratic dialogues of Plato that we might well turn to begin to address the issue at hand. Indeed, students of Western thought find themselves in rare agreement with one another with regard to the claim that Socrates is the prototype of the philosopher, literally, the lover of wisdom. As the creator of a tradition which has for twenty-four hundred years helped to determine the unique quality of our intellectual existence, Socrates beckons to us as the sole point of departure for a philosophic inquiry into the nature of leadership. No search for a philosophical perspective on leadership can fail to take as its starting point those Socratic teachings in which philosophy itself is born into Western culture.

SOCRATES: THE PHILOSOPHER AS LEADER

Socrates himself wrote nothing; the vast majority of our knowledge of the Socratic teachings comes from a reading of the dialogues written by his student, Plato, dialogues in which Socrates functions—in the main—as central personage. At the outset of our inquiry we must distinguish in these dialogues between the image of Socrates as philosopher-in-action and that of Socrates as mere spokesperson for the beliefs peculiar to Plato and to the Platonism of the Academy founded in the fourth century B.C., Athens. If Whitehead's contention, cited above, is to be understood as anything more than mere hyperbole, it is to the *person* of Socrates himself, rather than to the Platonic doctrines for which, it is argued, he served as central mouthpiece, that we must look for an understanding of philosophic enterprise in general and a genuinely philosophic view of leadership in particular.[11] The teachings of Socrates, in other words, must assume for us, as Nietzsche exclaims, their "supra-Greek" import.[12] This is not to deny the importance of the Platonic vision of leadership, the vision of the philosopher-king articulated in Book V of the *Republic* and summarized briefly above. Rather this depiction of the leader, along with all other such depictions in the history of philosophy, must be situated within a more fundamental understanding of the phenomenon of leadership offered in the dialogues by the image of Socrates himself *as philosopher*.

It is not to any one truth enunciated by Socrates that we can look for a sense of the essence of leadership. Indeed, Socrates goes to great lengths to recall to his fellow Athenians the fact that he has no hold on this or any other truth. In the *Apology*, his defense against the charges of impiety and corruption of the youth of Athens at his trial in 399 B.C., Socrates devotes himself to detailing the origins of his humility. In response to his puzzlement at the declaration of the Delphic oracle that no one is wiser than he, Socrates exclaims:

> I know very well that I am not wise, even in the smallest degree. Then what can [the Oracle] mean by saying that I am the wisest of men? It cannot be that he is speaking falsely, for he is a god and cannot lie. For a long time I was at a loss to investigate his meaning. Then, very reluctantly, I turned to investigate it in this manner: I went to a man who was reputed to be wisest, thinking that there, if anywhere, I should prove the answer wrong. . . . When I conversed with him I came to see that, though a great many persons, and most of all himself, thought he was wise, yet he was not wise. Then I tried to prove to him that he was not wise. By doing so I made him indignant. . . . So when I went away, I thought to myself: I am wiser than this man: neither of us knows anything that is really worth knowing, but he thinks that he has knowledge when he has not, while I, having no knowledge, do not think that I have.[13]

This paradox of Socratic "ignorance" serves as the basis for an understanding of philosophy as the love of wisdom: philosophy is not itself a body of wisdom but rather the striving or aspiring toward that end. In this conception, philosophy is a *way* of living one's life, an activity, a verb rather than a noun. Thus, prior to the attempt to define leadership, prior to *all* forms of human inquiry, must come the acknowledgment of an ultimately infinite interval separating the seeker from the wisdom sought. In Socrates' own words, in a summary of his encounter with the oracle:

> . . . I believe that the god is really wise, and that by this oracle he meant that human wisdom is worth little or nothing. I do not think he meant that Socrates was wise. He only made use of my name and took me as an example, as though he could say to me, "He among you is the wisest who, like Socrates, knows that his wisdom is really worth nothing at all."[14]

That this commitment to the *love of wisdom* is no mere posturing, no mere exercise of the intellect, is evidenced by Socrates' behavior as the trial progresses. With his life "on the line," Socrates continually reaffirms by his actions the mission of the philosopher of which he so eloquently speaks. Reflecting on the possibility that his accusers will exonerate him on condition that he renounce the life of the philosopher, Socrates exclaims:

> I say, if you offered to let me go on these terms, I should reply . . . "As long as I have breath and strength, I will not give up philosophy and exhorting you . . . saying, as I am accustomed, 'my good friend . . . are you not ashamed of caring so much for the making of money and for fame and prestige when you neither think nor care about wisdom and truth and the improvement of your soul?'"[15]

Indeed, Socrates' openness to a life of critique cannot be separated from the conclusion of the tale told in this and the accompanying "death dialogues." The reader must see Socrates in action in the final days of his life: Socrates faced with the opportunity to abandon the philosopher's life in order to obtain a verdict of innocence at his trial; Socrates given the choice to escape the death penalty by admitting guilt and posing banishment as his punishment; and, finally, Socrates granted the opportunity to escape his prison cell before the moment of the drinking of the hemlock. Socrates must embody (body forth) the infinite aspiration toward wisdom of which he speaks.

What Socrates advances in these words—and what he offers in particular to the student of the philosophy of leadership—is his embrace of what I shall term the *critical spirit* as the moral ground of all human endeavor. If, as Socrates claims later in the *Apology*, "an unexamined life is not worth living,"[16] then it is incumbent on the philosopher to subject him or herself to the practice of an endless humility: the practice of opening oneself to the limitedness of one's perspective and thus, in effect, to the

finitude of one's being. It is his lived affirmation of the centrality of the "examined life" for the conduct of a moral existence which, I will contend throughout this paper, makes Socrates the prototype of the philosopher-as-leader.

LEADERSHIP AS A MORAL ACTIVITY

If, as Socrates teaches, the willingness to examine the conduct of one's life in all of its aspects serves as the moral ground of all human endeavor, then leadership, *more than any other kind of human activity*, must demand of its practitioners a willingness to open themselves to critique. As that process by virtue of which human beings are moved to realize aims and fulfill purposes, leadership must be born—and perpetually sustained—in the movement to turn back upon itself and establish its own credentials. If, at a minimum, to lead is to assume the initiative in a relationship with others (followers) toward the pursuit of some goal,[17] then insofar as this initiative is something other than the brute exercise of power—insofar as leadership is the work of humans who are moral agents—it must root itself in that exercise of humility which is the mark of the philosopher. Indeed, I will argue below that the superior resource which leaders, by definition, bring to the leader-follower relationship is their very openness to the conduct of an examined life in the particular arena—family, small group, school, state, to name just a few—in which the relationship is realized: subtending *all* forms of leadership is that philosophic "ignorance" which makes possible, indeed, demands an initiative of the leader which is moral and thus human in the fullest sense of that word.

Two observations pertaining to the terms *moral* and *philosophic* in which my contention is offered must be made at this juncture. First, it should be noted that in identifying the "fully human" initiative of the leader with "moral" initiative, I am in no sense subscribing to any understanding of morality arbitrarily derived from a history of ideas. Rather, the link that I would establish between being human and being moral is grounded in the contemporary philosophic claim that to be authentically human is to see our conduct as problematic. As twentieth-century existentialist analysis and literature have so vigorously sought to call to our attention, *how we act is for us always an issue*. Unlike the plant that bends with the wind—unlike the representative of any alleged "human nature" with fixed attributes which are automatically manifested—the human qua human is one the shape of whose existence is always in question for itself.[18] Indeed, to refuse this status as a problematic being is, ontologically speaking, an impossibility, since this refusal must itself be adopted as a response to a perceived problematic and thus affirm the very self-questioning it would deny. In the very

endeavor to refuse our freedom as moral agents—in the endeavor to liken ourselves to things, to entities which fall on a causal continuum—we betray ourselves as "choosing not to choose"! In attempting to cover over our moral nature, in refusing to participate in the endeavor to justify our conduct *before ourselves*, we fail to acknowledge our role as beings who *act* in the fullest sense of that word; in refusing to justify our conduct *before others*, we fail to acknowledge our roles as beings who *communicate* in the fullest sense of that word as well. I will return below to these two failures and their relationship to a philosophical understanding of the leader's vocation.

Second, it should be evident to the reader that in speaking of the leader's vocation as at root *philosophic*, I am using the term in a sense which extends beyond its ordinary usage in pointing to a given academic discipline. If the leader is to be identified with the philosopher, it is with the practitioner of that discipline which at its primordial moment has no specific content. Thus (professional) philosopher-leaders stand under the same obligation as their fellow leaders in all human arenas to turn back upon themselves in a perpetual movement to acquire what T. S. Eliot calls "the wisdom of humility."[19] Indeed, it might be argued that to the extent that the (professional) philosopher's "business" is to inquire into the nature of all that is, he or she must be unusually zealous in the attempt to guard against substituting the rhetoric of the sophist (literally, one who knows) for the dialogue of the philosopher (one who loves and aspires toward wisdom). Thus, for example, Socrates' reply to Critias, who has accused him of intellectual bullying in place of an earnest search for truth:

> How can you think that I have any other motive in refuting you but what I should have in examining into myself? This motive would be just a fear of my unconsciously fancying that I knew something of which I was ignorant.[20]

Socrates as the prototype of the philosopher-leader is at home not in the schools, but in the marketplace in which his unique commitment to the perpetual calling into question of his own presumption to know can be more fully realized. At the core of this ideal of leadership is that questioning of all resources which is the ultimate resource of the leader as moral agent.

LEADERSHIP AND POWER

In pointing to the critical spirit as the ground of all leadership, my intent has been to argue that without that willingness to examine one's life, alleged leaders in any and all areas of human endeavor must, of necessity, become identified with their purposes, purposes which inevitably congeal into fixed doctrines or dogma. In short, potential leaders *without this ground* find

themselves in the service of fixed ideas or causes, and thus agents of the use of power in their behalf. *No longer nourished by a wellspring of critical process at its center, leadership "dries up" and becomes, finally, the mere wielding of power on behalf of static ideals.* Human discourse becomes, at best, the attempt on the part of the mightier of body and/or mind to impress their views on the weaker by means of exhortation, harangue, sermon. At worst, such an imposition of ideas is accomplished by means of that threat of the exercise of brute force which is the work of the tyrant.

Once again the image of Socrates serves to exemplify the work of the leader as opposed to that of the mere wielder of power. Perhaps nowhere in the Platonic corpus is the distinction between power and critical process more fully celebrated than in the dialogue—named after a famed sophist or rhetorician of the period—*Gorgias*. Centered around a discussion of the difference between the vocation of the rhetorician and that of the philosopher, the dialogue derives its force by virtue of its essentially self-illustrative nature: Socrates and his three interlocutors are the practitioners of the vocations which, respectively, they defend. By the time Socrates encounters Callicles, the third representative of the rhetorician's art, the crucial distinction between rhetoric and philosophy—between the exercise of naked power and that of the spirit of critique—has become clear. In an extended monologue Callicles sings the praises of the rhetorician's art of persuasion through use of verbal might: "This," he proclaims, "is . . . how justice is determined: the stronger shall rule and have the advantage over his inferior."[21] Philosophy, on the other hand, avails its practitioners nothing at all in the struggle for dominance over others:

> Of course, Socrates, philosophy does have a certain charm if one engages with it in one's youth and in moderation; but if one dallies over long, it's the ruin of a fellow. . . . A boy who doesn't play with philosophy I regard as illiberal. . . . Whereas when I see an older man still at his philosophy and showing no signs of giving it up, that one seems to me, Socrates, to be asking for some hard knocks. . . . For as the situation is now, if anyone were to arrest you . . . declaring that you'd broken the law though you hadn't done a thing, you know perfectly well that you wouldn't be able to help yourself.[22]

Philosophy, Callicles asserts, is ineffective in that game of power which constitutes the essense of human existence in general and leadership activity in particular.

Socrates' immediate reply to Callicles' speech calls attention to the crucial nature of the conversation to follow. Indeed, he is overjoyed to have encountered Callicles, that ultimate "touchstone" who, whenever he agrees with him about any matter whatsoever, gives Socrates the assurance that "it must be the whole truth."[23] The dialogue that follows starkly contrasts not only two opinions rooted in two seemingly diametrically opposed Weltanschauungen but also two ways of being-in-the-world, two funda-

mental stances of the human being qua human. What Plato teaches is that insofar as Callicles attempts to enter into dialogue with Socrates, and thus insofar as he implicitly appeals to a standard of rationality which lies beyond his personal resources, he is tacitly abandoning his claim to the primacy of might in the conduct of leadership. Thus it is the case that Callicles' alleged position or world view is no view, no philosophy at all. To engage in discourse—as opposed to the brute exercise of rhetorical persuasion—is already to have acknowledged the primacy of the philosopher's critical thrust, his or her search for wisdom. In order for Callicles to win the day, in other words, he must resort to the exercise of verbal or physical blows: the rhetorician, indeed any practitioner of power, is barred by definition from dialogue, from presenting his or her case before the forum of reason. Power wielders can thrive only in the superior presentation of arms against arms; philosophers, on the other hand, can lead, can "lead out" another, only by refusing the presentation of arms, only by disarming themselves and their interlocutors in a work of peace.

No wonder, then, that those of Socrates' interlocutors who refuse philosophy as a way of life are depicted as either hurling abuse at the philosopher[24] or as fleeing from that setting in which their participation in dialogue is required.[25] Callicles, representative of the rhetorician as wielder of verbal power, cannot peacefully coexist with his interlocutor in a universe which is common to both:

> Tell me, Socrates, are we to take you seriously at this point or are you only jesting? For if you're serious and what you say is really true, won't human life have to be turned completely upside down? Everything we do, it seems, is the exact opposite of what we ought to do.[26]

And Callicles is certainly correct: the implications of Socrates' embodiment of the critical spirit are so radical, so "root," as to be dizzying! Nor is this revolution in human affairs the simple reversal of truth and falsehood that Callicles proclaims: it is not the case that all opinions or acts must be "turned completely upside down," but rather that all so-called truths of human knowledge and conduct must take on an ultimately provisional cast. Truth is now seen to reside not in a given doctrine or set of behaviors but rather in the give-and-take of critical process in which ever new perspectives on the issue in question are progressively disclosed. For the fixed absolutes of the truth and falsehood of philosophical views is to be substituted the *living* absolute of the exercise of a critical spirit animating human conduct in general and the work of the leader—initiator of the conduct of others—most particularly.

Nor is the above to be construed as a mere quibble among those inclined to metaphysical or epistemological speculation. If leadership is to be other than mere power wielding, it must be rooted in what I, following

the teaching of the *Gorgias*—indeed, the teaching of the entire Socratic tradition—have termed throughout this chapter a *moral* initiative. For Socrates morality is not merely a derivative of metaphysics, that branch of philosophy which deals with such concepts as good and evil. Contrary to the main body of Western thought extending from Aristotle in the fourth century B.C. to Hegel in the nineteenth century A.D.—a body of thought which with few exceptions has viewed metaphysics as its central concern—Socratic tradition is firmly rooted in morality as "first philosophy." Socrates' interlocutors in the dialogues go away empty-handed not because of any intellectual deficiency on their parts. They fail in their discourse with Socrates for lack of a concern with the "care of their soul" which, I have argued, is precisely that which distinguishes true leaders from mere practitioners of power. The Socratic leader teaches no doctrine, no fixed body of knowledge: what he or she teaches is the desire to be taught.

LEADERSHIP AS DIALOGUE

The Socratic image—prototype of the ideal leader—is an image which Plato frequently identifies with the "gadfly." Socrates is morally justified in "prodding" others to act, however, only insofar as he has subjected his own actions to critical scrutiny. The work of the gadfly-leader is to be clearly distinguished from that, for example, of the teacher-leader who knows an "answer" in advance, but who, for the sake of promoting some ideal of learning, wishes to elicit that answer from the student-follower himself or herself. ". . . Critias," Socrates exclaims on this subject in the dialogue entitled *Charmides*, "but you come to me as though I professed to know about the questions which I ask, and as though I could, if only I would, agree with you. Whereas the fact is that I am inquiring with you . . . just because I do not know. . . ."[27] Nor does Socrates play the role of a devil's advocate. Although interlocutors are contested on each and every point advanced, and although irony is present throughout the dialogues, all discourse is entered into by Socrates with a seriousness of purpose which must be distinguished from the more superficial notion of search implied in devil's advocacy. In the words of the contemporary French philosopher Maurice Merleau-Ponty:

> The irony of Socrates is not to say less in order to win an advantage in showing great mental power, or in suggesting some esoteric knowledge. "Whenever I convince anyone of his ignorance," the *Apology* says with melancholy, "my listeners imagine that I know everything that he does not know." Socrates does not know any more than they know. He knows, only that there is no absolute knowledge and that it is by this absence that we are open to the truth.[28]

What is at stake here is nothing short of the "healing" of that fatal illness of the presumption-to-know which leads at best to complacency and the interruption of meaningful discourse, and at worst to the employment of power in the service of unquestioned ideas, of dogma.

With this image of the gadfly-leader in mind, it now becomes evident that the use of the dialogue form in the Socratic dialogues of Plato is no accident, no gratuitous choice of format. Just as the declamation, the harangue, the propaganda piece, is the work of the wielder of power, the adherent of a static truth, so must dialogue serve as the medium for the philosopher-leader whose image we are exploring in this chapter. Given over to the realization at one and the same time of the finite nature of his or her perspective and the infinite nature of the quest for truth, the leader in the Socratic sense must of necessity embark on that give-and-take of critique which is the process of dialogue itself: the leader's medium is, indeed, the message. Nor is this to argue that any concrete expression of dialogical form guarantees the exercise of the critical spirit which has here been advanced as the essence of all leadership. In the words of Martin Buber, ". . . there is monologue disguised as dialogue, in which two or more men meeting in space speak each with himself in strangely tortuous or circuitous ways. . . ."[29] Rather than look to any external format as sufficient evidence for the presence of dialogical thrust in human interaction, we must look to an underlying commitment to critical process for proof of the existence of dialogical activity in the full range of settings in which we speak of leaders and their followers.

In dialogical interactions, moreover, what distinguishes leaders from followers is the possession by the former of a degree of critical perspective lacking in the latter. The teacher-leader, for example, can educate (literally, *e-ducere*, lead out) only insofar as he or she knows better than the apprentice-follower the infinite nature of the task of imparting truth. ("The teacher," exclaims Martin Heidegger, "is capable of being more teachable than the apprentices.")[30] Followers, however, are followers only insofar as this ability to perceive the ever-widening series of perspectives in which the issue at hand must be situated is, *at a given juncture*, less developed than that of the leader. Followers are not locked into their followership. The very essence of dialogue consists in that mutual offering of perspectives which allows for—indeed, promotes—the movement of followers into leadership roles both in relation to others less aware than they of the need to acknowledge their (Socratic) ignorance and, also, in relation to those (former) leaders whose horizons of meaning may now be more limited than those of their (former) followers! In this sense leadership is a dialogical movement in which both participants engage in that process of critique—the love of wisdom—in which their very identities as the leader and the led are continually in question.

Leadership understood as a dialogical activity manifests itself in a wide variety of human settings. The child-follower in the parent-child relationship, for example, is one who at this stage in his or her life lacks knowledge of the complexities surrounding a given issue that is possessed by the parent-leader. In the endeavor to articulate a truly philosophic notion of leadership, however, it must be recalled that the mere acquisition of knowledge on the part of the parent-leader is in and of itself no guarantee that it will be used on behalf of genuine leadership activity. To be a leader in the situation described above, the parent must preserve an openness not only to possible inadequacies with regard to quantities of information but, more importantly, to the possibilities of prejudgment or presupposition which lie at the root of *all* inadequacy of knowing. Such an awareness of this all-too-human presumption to know is the prerequisite for that dialogical interchange with the child-follower which is the setting for true leadership activity.

The presence of dialogue, moreover, implies no given *style* of interaction. The "mechanics" of the process may be different in each and every leadership situation. At one juncture a tenor which is inspirational may prevail; at another, one which is closer to what is termed *managerial*. In one instance leadership may be expressed in a mode which more closely resembles the activist's "call to action"; in another, an (allegedly) passive "leadership by example" may be operative. Underlying all expressions of leadership, however, must be that willingness on the part of leaders to subject themselves to critique which prohibits coercion or force in any or all of its many guises.

POLITICAL LEADERSHIP

Leadership in the political sphere is to be understood in the same manner as leadership in the school or home. Indeed, the implications of our conception of leadership for an understanding of the essence of participatory democracy are nothing short of profound. Although the concrete external forms in which such democracies manifest themselves may vary, the core of democratic process is embodied in our notion of leadership as a dialogical activity. If it is the case that leaders qua leaders open themselves to dialogical interchange with their followers, then all questions surrounding the basis for the consent of the governed to those who govern, all queries concerning the ratification of the decisions of leaders by the led, are rendered superfluous. The justification for consent, in other words, is to be looked for neither in the needs or abilities of leaders and/or their followers nor in the demands of historical circumstance, but rather in the nature of leadership itself. Moral leadership as a dialogical activity is itself the realization of the essence of participatory democracy.

The statesperson-leader, in our depiction of Socratic leadership, is thus one who steadfastly acknowledges his or her ignorance of a static truth in the affairs of the polis, one who refuses to be identified with any credo, any unquestioned set of beliefs which might acquire the status of an absolute. Nor is this to advocate or even suggest a lack of coherent policy in the conduct of the affairs of state. The policymaker-leader is one who, paradoxically, takes a stand and, at one and the same moment, is prepared to call that very stand into question! The provisional nature of such a stand in no sense serves to remove it from a ground, a rootedness in human resolve. On the contrary, the moral status of such resolve, and thus its fully human ground, is assured—indeed, made possible—by the critical spirit in which it originates and in which it is perpetually maintained. As that living "stand" which is both formulated and continually offered in dialogue with others, the leader's policy is *ultimately provisional*, but in no ordinary sense *merely tentative*. Rather, as that living truth which has been reached between interlocutors in the process of dialogue, it represents the sole sense of "truth" which can pertain to human beings qua human and thus falls outside any "tentative-fixed" continuum on which we might be tempted to place it.

Leadership in the Socratic sense, then, in no way is to be equated with a hindering or postponement of political action. Not only does the exercise of political leadership in dialogue not hinder or inhibit effective action but a sense of "empowering" here manifests itself, an empowering which, in sharp contrast to the "power" employed in verbal or physical coercion, accounts for the deep gratitude we extend to the true leaders of our past and the yearning we express for the birth of those who will so lead us in the future. It is the very presence of what I have called the critical spirit in the work of the leader which opens up the necessary "interval" within which choice can be exercised and activity undertaken which is creative in nature. Indeed, for participants in dialogue to be challenged and perhaps disabused of assumptions concerning the nature of a given human context is already for these individuals to move toward an understanding of truth-as-a-process in which they come to see their responsibility for the shaping of human affairs and thus the possibility for genuinely new and effective political action. As long as one is in the service of fixed notions and static ideals, creative expression is, by definition, rendered impossible. The leader-follower relation which I am endeavoring to articulate here is one which *empowers* the follower—indeed, *both* members of the relationship—to that creative activity in which the horizons of meaning surrounding the issues at hand are perpetually stretched.

This generative or empowering act of leadership, moreover, is one not lightly chosen. In eschewing all certainties of knowledge, all fixed truths, political leaders in the Socratic sense open themselves up to what Jean-Paul Sartre and has fellow existentialists in twentieth-century continental

philosophy have termed the *anguish* accompanying authentic choice. Anguish, in the Sartrean sense, is to be distinguished from *fear*, with which it is often confused. Anguish is always experienced *before myself*; fear is fear of beings in the world. More precisely, I am fearful of *things* and their possible harmful effects on me; I am anguished, on the other hand, at the realization that *no thing* can determine for me which of my possible futures I will choose, which meaning I will attribute to the me-who-is-about-to-be. Such anguish, however, poses no barrier to decisive political action. "All leaders know that anguish," Sartre exclaims. "It does not prevent their acting, on the contrary it is the very condition of their action, for the action presupposes that there is a plurality of possibilities. . . ."[31] Without situating oneself in that interval opened up by the acknowledgment of the primacy of critical process, the so-called political leader will act in the name of an ideal itself unexamined and thus fail to act—in the full sense of the word—at all!

THE LEADER AS MIDWIFE

Where, then, have we come in our endeavor to articulate a genuinely philosophic view of leadership? In looking to Socrates as prototype of the ideal leader, we have been guided less by a consideration of the crucial role which Plato's philosophy has played in the history of ideas in the West, and more by a consideration of the Socratic *image* as fundamental in the articulation of the moral ground of human activity. As initiators of change in the human arena—and thus as primary movers of human learning—leaders, more than any other figures in the human landscape, must fulfill their roles by dint of their embrace of the critical spirit embodied by Socrates. The absolute primacy of this image for an articulation of the nature of leadership, moreover, is a primacy which resists the corroding forces of a judgment which would locate it in a history of philosophical notions and thereby challenge its very claim to the status of an absolute. Because it exhausts itself in its will to submit itself to judgment, the Socratic teaching—at root—has no content which would limit it to the expression of one idea among many in the progression of Western thought. As a *living* absolute, the Socratic "message" is *nothing but* the continual movement of a "freeing of itself from a presumption to know."

The acknowledgment of this absolute which, I have argued, must subtend all forms of leadership activity yields no immediate fruit in the endeavor to resolve the major issues which beset the student of leadership. The substantial issues of historical causation, of the relative weight of the "great person" as opposed to that of historical circumstance, for example, admit of no easy resolution as a result of the deliberations in this chapter. Nor is any immediate light shed either on the question of what specific

properties a so-called great person must possess or on the question of what specific characteristics a given sociopolitical context must manifest for it to play a role in the causal process issuing in leadership activity. To say that the leader must be the bearer of a so-called critical spirit is, in one sense, to leave everything "as it is." And yet, paradoxically, a characterization of the ground of leadership as the exercise of Socratic humility leaves nothing untouched. No given set of characteristics accruing to a leader nor any determinate list of circumstances out of which a leader-follower relationship is allegedly born can, in themselves, give rise to the phenomenon of leadership without the presence of that willingness to aspire to wisdom, that openness to truth-as-a-process, which is the Socratic teaching itself. Thus, as a result of these reflections none of those traditional characterizations of the leader as, let us say, intelligent, knowledgeable, or aggressive comes to be seen to play any less—or more—of a role in the determination of authentic leadership than had previously been thought to be the case. The acknowledgment of the Socratic teaching, however, points to that moral ground in which all of these alleged traits of a leader must be situated in order for them to be considered as leadership traits in a fully human sense. The same may be said for responses to those sociopolitical circumstances, such as poverty or civil strife, which allegedly call forth leadership activity. Without a "home" in the infinite endeavor to question one's own presumption to know, any response to these "givens" fails to root itself in a conduct of leadership which is truly moral.

Perhaps the most powerful metaphor for the Socratic image of which we have been speaking is to be found in the Platonic dialogue *Theaetetus*. Here Socrates refers to himself not "merely" as the gadfly who awakens a "sluggish" people from their slumber but also as the "midwife" who knows that such an awakening is precisely the birth of all learning:

> I am so far like the midwife that I cannot myself give birth to wisdom; and the common reproach is true, that though I question others, I can myself bring nothing to light because there is no wisdom in me. The reason is this: heaven constrains me to serve as a midwife, but has debarred me from giving birth.[32]

This creating or empowering aspect of Socratic leadership of which we have spoken receives its fullest expression in the development of this metaphor:

> . . . those who seek my company have the same experience as a woman with child; they suffer the pains of labor and, by night and day, are full of distress far greater than a woman's; and my art has power to bring on these pains or to allay them.[33]

The midwife-leader, then, is the epitome of the leader as one who, having acknowledged his or her own need to examine the course of a life, enables

the other—in a dialogical setting—to move toward a similar openness to truth-as-a-process. Kierkegaard is certainly addressing Socrates-as-leader when he exclaims, some twenty-three hundred years later, "[Socrates] entered into the role of midwife and sustained it throughout; not because his thought 'had no positive content,' but because he perceived that this relation is the highest that one human being can sustain to another."[34] If we are to acknowledge the import of Kierkegaard's encomium—as well as the Nietzschean injunction to "overcome" our present selves—it is the Socratic image of leadership which may well serve as our guide.

NOTES

1. Plato, *Republic*, trans. Benjamin Jowett, in Erwin Edman, ed., *The Works of Plato* (New York: Random House, 1956), p. 431. Books V and VI of this work contain the fullest expression of the concept of the philosopher-king.
2. Ibid., p. 447.
3. Niccolò Machiavelli, *The Prince*, trans. Luigi Ricci, *The Prince and The Discourses* (New York: Random House, 1950), p. 56. The primary works of Machiavelli to be consulted for an understanding of his views on leadership are *The Prince* and *The Discourses on the First Ten Books of Titus Livius*.
4. Machiavelli, *The Discourses*, trans. Christian Detmold, *The Prince* and *The Discourses*, p. 255.
5. Thomas Hobbes, *Leviathan* (Oxford, Basil Blackwell, 1946), p. 112. Parts I and II of this work contain the essence of Hobbes's philosophy of leadership.
6. Ibid.
7. Friedrich Nietzsche, *Thus Spake Zarathustra*, trans. R.J. Hollingdale (Baltimore: Penguin Books, 1969), pp. 41–44. For other articulations of Nietzsche's concept of the *Übermensch*, *see* for example, *The Anti-Christ* and *Ecce Homo*.
8. Ibid., p. 117.
9. Alfred North Whitehead, *Adventures of Ideas* (New York: New American Library, Mentor Books, 1964), p. 229.
10. Martin Heidegger, *What Is Called Thinking?* trans. Fred Wieck and J. Glenn Gray (New York: Harper & Row, Pub., 1972), p. 26.
11. The discussion continues among classical scholars as to the degree of faithfulness-to-life of the Platonic portrait of Socrates. *See* in this regard: A.E. Taylor, *Socrates* (Garden City, N.Y.: Doubleday, Anchor Book, 1953), and A.R. Lacey, "Our Knowledge of Socrates," in Gregory Vlastos, ed., *The Philosophy of Socrates* (Garden City, N.Y.: Doubleday, Anchor Book, 1971). The debate between scholars who argue for the accuracy of historical portrait and those who claim that Socrates is a literary invention of Plato and others fails to address directly the question of a fundamental Socratic teaching, which is my concern in this paper.
12. Quoted in Walter Kaufmann, *Nietzsche: Philosopher, Psychologist, Antichrist* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1968), p. 406.
13. Plato, *Apology*, trans. F.J. Church (Indianapolis: Bobbs-Merrill, 1956), p. 26.
14. Ibid., pp. 27–28.
15. Ibid., pp. 35–36.
16. Ibid., p. 45.

17. This preliminary formulation emerges from a reading of James MacGregor Burns, *Leadership* (New York: Harper & Row, Pub., 1978), especially chapter I.
18. See in this regard Martin Heidegger's definition of *human reality* as a being who "in its very Being, that Being is an issue for it." In *Being and Time*, trans. John Macquarrie and Edward Robinson (New York: Harper & Row, Pub., 1962), p. 32.
19. T.S. Eliot, *Four Quartets* (New York: Harcourt, Brace, & World, 1943), p. 27.
20. Plato, *Charmides*, trans. Benjamin Jowett, in Edith Hamilton and Huntington Cairns, eds., *The Collected Dialogues of Plato* (New York: Random House, Pantheon Books, 1961), p. 112.
21. Plato, *Gorgias*, trans W.C. Helmbold (Indianapolis: Bobbs-Merrill, 1952), p. 52.
22. Ibid., pp. 52–54.
23. Ibid., p. 55.
24. Plato's depiction of the character of Polus in *Gorgias* is a fine example of this.
25. *See*, for example, Plato's *Euthyphro*.
26. Plato, *Gorgias*, p. 49.
27. Plato, *Charmides*, p. 111.
28. Maurice Merleau-Ponty, *In Praise of Philosophy*, trans. John Wild and James Edie (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 1963), p. 59.
29. Martin Buber, "Dialogue," trans. Ronald Gregor Smith, in *Between Man and Man* (New York: Macmillan, 1965), p. 19.
30. Heidegger, *What Is Called Thinking?* p. 15.
31. Jean-Paul Sartre, "Existentialism is a Humanism," trans. Philip Mairet, in Walter Kaufmann, ed., *Existentialism From Dostoevsky to Sartre* (New York: New American Library, Meridian Book, 1975), p. 552.
32. Plato, *Theaetetus*, in *Plato's Theory of Knowledge: The Theaetetus and the Sophist of Plato*, trans. Francis M. Cornford (New York: Bobbs, Merrill, 1957), p. 26.
33. Ibid., pp. 26–27.
34. Soren Kierkegaard, *Philosophical Fragments*, trans. David Swenson (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1962), p. 12. Kierkegaard includes an explanatory footnote following the phrase "had no positive content," elaborating on this nineteenth century critique of Socratic philosophy.

READING 2

Leadership research: Choosing gods and devils on the run

M. W. McCall, Jr

SOURCE

M. W. McCall, Jr. 'Leadership research: Choosing gods and devils on the run', *Journal of Occupational Psychology*, vol. 49, no. 3, 1976, pp. 139–53.

The accumulated research, while contributing substantially to our understanding of complex leadership processes, has not yet produced an integrated body of knowledge. Still plagued by definitional ambiguity, a proliferation of terms, and contradictory research findings, the mountain of evidence has left many unanswered questions.

Traditional approaches to leadership have focused primarily on the relationship between the leader and the group. Studies of what managers actually do—as opposed to what they should, could, or say they do—suggest that the leader–system relationship may be a more fruitful focus. The nature of managerial work, as reflected by observed behaviour, can be a valuable guide for designing future leadership research and training.

A colleague once remarked that 'if leadership is bright orange, leadership research is decidedly slate grey'. This paper will begin with an example of the bright orange, but focus on the grey. The goal is to outline what leadership research has and has not said about leadership, and where researchers and trainers might concentrate in the future.

First, an example of the bright orange of leadership as seen by Tolstoy:

> Napoleon was standing a little in front of his marshals, on a little grey Arab horse, wearing the same blue overcoat he had worn throughout the Italian campaign. He was looking intently and silently at the hills, which stood up out of the sea of mist, and the Russian troops moving across them in the distance, and he listened to the sounds of firing in the valley. His face—still thin in those days—did not stir a single muscle; his gleaming eyes were fixed intently on one spot . . .
>
> When the sun had completely emerged from the fog, and was glittering with dazzling brilliance over the fields and the mist (as though he had been waiting for that to begin the battle), he took his glove off his handsome white hand, made a signal with it to his marshals, and gave orders for the battle to begin (From *War and Peace*).

Courage, stamina, power, charisma; the fate of armies and nations—all conjured up by the single term leadership. A vital commodity since the beginnings of humanity, leadership remains a topic of central interest, vested with the trappings of myth, legend, and imagery. Powerful leaders have achieved immortality in songs, poems, novels, and history; and names like Churchill, Patton, Joan of Arc, Napoleon, and Washington have become synonymous with leadership. We speak freely of leaders in science, philosophy, medicine, politics and war. We live daily with leaders of our organizations, clubs, social groups, cities and nations.

• Paper presented to the Occupational Psychology Section, British Psychological Society, Keele, Staffordshire, England, January 1976. A chapter on this subject will appear in Hackman, J., Lawler, E. & Porter, L. (1977). *Perspectives on Behavior in Organization*. New York: McGraw-Hill.

BACKGROUND

Given the ubiquity of leadership, it is no surprise that social scientists have devoted massive amounts of time and resources to studying leaders and leadership. Empirical work on the subject can be traced back to the early 1900s (Stogdill, 1974). Since then, researchers have examined leadership in almost every conceivable setting from army squads to executives; they have examined personality traits, leadership styles, situational contingencies, training, power and a multitude of other topics pertinent to leadership. With leadership studies appearing at a rate of more than 170 a year, it seems reasonable to ask what we know about this elusive topic.

In 1959, after more than 20 years of empirical work on leadership, Warren Bennis made the following comment: 'Of all the hazy and confounding areas in social psychology, leadership theory undoubtedly contends for top nomination. And, ironically, probably more has been written and less known about leadership than about any other topic in the behavioral sciences' (Bennis, 1959, p.259). He went on to point out that: (1) the concept was not sufficiently defined, (2) an 'endless proliferation of terms' had emerged to deal with leadership, (3) there was a 'mountain' of evidence, and (4) the evidence was contradictory. After 16 more years of research, it appears that his points are still valid.

The concept is not sufficiently defined

Stogdill's review of the leadership literature points out that 'there are almost as many different definitions of leadership as there are persons who have attempted to define the concept' (1974, p.7). Stogdill then devoted ten pages to describing general classifications of definitions of leadership. Mintzberg (1973) described eight major schools of thought on the manager's job. Pfeffer (in press) looked at the leadership literature and commented, 'In spite of the voluminous research on leadership, the definition and the dimensions of the concept remain uncertain'.

Perhaps the closest thing to a consensus on a definition for leadership is that it is a social influence process. 'But then so are most things that involve more than one person . . ., so have we solved anything by that categorization?' (Pondy, in press).

There is an endless proliferation of terms

The apparent definitional problems with leadership have contributed to the proliferation of terms to describe it. Since Bennis's remarks in 1959, a whole new series of theories, models, approaches, and schemas (each with its own terminology) has appeared in the literature. To mention only a few, we now see the path–goal theory, the contingency model, a contingency approach to leadership, a contingency theory of leadership, a behavioural theory of leadership, an open system model of leadership performance, the transactional approach, a four-factor theory of leadership, an integrative model, a vertical dyad linkage approach to leadership, and a normative model of leadership styles.

The mountain of data is growing

Along with the continued proliferation of terms, and in spite of (because of?) the lack of definitional clarity, research has continued at a staggering pace. For his recent survey of the literature, Stogdill (1974) prepared more than 5000 abstracts and selected over 3000 of them for inclusion in his book. He ignored 'inspirational and advisory literature' and 'numerous biographical studies of charismatic leaders'.

A review of studies appearing in five major empirical journals between January 1974 and November 1975 produced 115 references to articles on leadership (the journals searched included *Organizational Behavior and Human Performance*, *Journal of Applied Psychology*, *Academy of Management Journal*, *Personnel Psychology* and *Administrative Science Quarterly*). Clearly, Bennis's mountain of evidence has grown substantially.

The evidence is contradictory

Examples of contradictory evidence in the leadership research are so numerous that a few will have to suffice here.

Fiedler's (1967) contingency model has been a focus for many current researchers. Fiedler postulates that the effectiveness of a group depends on the leader's motivational orientation (person vs. task) and on the nature of the situation (determined by the structuredness of the task, the position power of the leader, and the quality of leader-member relations). The elaborate model contains a continuum of situational favourableness (from highly favourable to highly unfavourable) and postulates that task-motivated leaders are effective in highly favourable and unfavourable situations, while person-motivated leaders are effective in the moderately favourable situations.

An incredible number of studies based on the model exist, but the accumulated evidence is inconclusive.

The meaning of the instrument Fiedler developed for measuring leadership (the LPC) has been described as task versus person orientation, as a cognitive style variable, as an attitude measure, and as a measure of motivational systems. No one is yet exactly sure what it measures.

Other contradictory evidence exists regarding the path-goal model (House, 1971). Built on an expectancy theory framework, the path-goal model argues that a leader's style (task or person orientation) is effective when it clarifies linkages between subordinate effort and valued subordinate outcomes. Supported by several studies (e.g. Evans, 1970), the model has been contradicted or substantially modified in several others (e.g. Hammer & Dachler, 1975).

Leadership style has been a topic of empirical investigation since the 1930s. Variously described as democratic-autocratic, person oriented-task oriented, consideration-initiating structure, and so on, style is a major component of almost all current leadership theories. More data exist on this than on any other aspect of leadership. Still, equivocal results mark the literature on relationships between leadership style and a myriad of organizational criteria (Korman, 1966; Kerr & Schriesheim, 1974).

Some authors, in an attempt to resolve the contradictions, have summed the studies supporting a particular hypothesis and compared that with the number of studies failing to support it (Stogdill, 1974). Others have attempted to clarify the contradictions by developing contingency frameworks (e.g. House, 1971). While these efforts continue, other evidence indicates that the instruments used to measure the basic construct, leadership style, have questionable psychometric properties (Schriesheim & Kerr, 1974).

It is clear that all the contradictions are frustrating, but it is less clear that the recurring contradictions represent a process of gradual refinement rather than a hopeless impasse. Whatever the reasons, frustration with the leadership literature has been expressed more and more often. 'It is difficult to know what, if anything, has

been convincingly demonstrated by replicated research. The endless accumulation of empirical data has not produced an integrated understanding of leadership' (Stogdill, 1974, p.vii). 'The heresy I propose is that the concept of leadership itself has outlived its usefulness. Thus I suggest we abandon it in favor of some other more fruitful way of cutting up the theoretical pie' (Miner, 1975, p.5)

WHAT DO WE KNOW?

Given the confusion over definitions, the proliferation of terms, and the mountain of contradictory evidence, it is tempting to dismiss the topic of leadership and search for more promising social science areas. Leadership is not unique, however, and the same problems plaguing research in that area also trouble researchers in other disciplines and areas (for example, a search of Psychological Abstracts generated 10 994 references to motivation in the last eight years, and few could argue that motivation is fully understood).

After 40 years of accumulation, our mountain of evidence about leadership seems to offer few clear-cut facts. Most of the relative certainties deal with things that are *not* true, reflecting a tendency to hone our understanding of leadership by inadvertently finding out what it is not.

Naturally enough, much of the early work on leadership attempted to isolate the characteristics of people which distinguish leaders from non-leaders, or successful from unsuccessful leaders. Almost every conceivable trait and characteristic, from activity to weight, has been examined, but the results have been equivocal. The initial hope that leaders shared common characteristics across situations has not been borne out, and it now appears that personal characteristics are related to leadership outcomes only in highly specific situations (Campbell, Dunnette, Lawler & Weick, 1970). Unfortunately it is not yet clear which aspects of a situation are the most critical.

Another approach to leadership involves the 'style' a leader uses in dealing with subordinates. Many different labels have been generated to describe essentially two styles of leadership (the number of styles ranges from two to five): task oriented and person (consideration) oriented. While initially conceived of as the behaviour of leaders, styles are most commonly measured by one of several paper-and-pencil questionnaires; thus, they represent self or others' reported perceptions rather than actual behaviour.

The human relations school at first contended that leaders should emphasize considerate, participative styles. Consideration of employee feelings and allowing them to participate in decision making would result in increased satisfaction which, it was thought, would improve performance. While considerate leader behaviour did generally lead to increased satisfaction, satisfaction did not necessarily lead to improved performance. Equivocal and sometimes negative results (Stogdill, 1974) indicated that this normative approach was not the answer in all situations.

Other researchers argued that an effective leader must be high on structuring and also high on consideration. Again, the data did not clearly conform to the normative prescriptions (e.g. Larson, Hunt & Osborn, 1975). Further refinements aimed at isolating the specific situations in which certain styles were effective (e.g. Vroom & Yetton, 1973) have replaced the earlier, simpler models, but as yet no adequate taxonomy of situational components exists.

Data do exist, however, that leaders change their styles in response to situational conditions (Hill & Hughes, 1974) and to subordinate behaviours (Lowin & Craig,

1968). Nor are leaders perceived by subordinates to have 'one style' (Hill, 1973). Thus, the search for invariant truth (the one-best-way approach) may not hold answers, even when a model includes situational moderators. Leaders may have numerous behaviours to choose from, not two or three, and may face a wide variety of different situations. A number of leadership behaviours may be equally effective in the same situation. As researchers include task structures, power, politics, hierarchical level, subordinate expectations, subordinate performance, and other organizational characteristics in their models, predictive power and model complexity increase. Only one thing is clear: no one leadership style is effective in all situations.

It is striking that most of the current theories and the bulk of current research focus on two basic sets of variables: leadership style and indices of group performance. Newer models all throw in some kind of contingency framework, arguing that some subset of situational conditions determines which style will produce the desired results. Leadership style is almost always measured by paper-and-pencil questionnaires, but when leader behaviour is measured directly, as is the case in most assessment centre operations, predictions of future managerial success improve (Howard, 1974).

The assessment centre is an increasingly popular tool for assessing managerial potential. It generally consists of putting candidates through a series of simulations and having trained raters observe their performance. The ratings are then pooled judgementally or actuarily to predict future management success. Relative to the traditional methods of management selection (e.g. interviews, supervisory ratings, paper-and-pencil tests), assessment centre predictions have been considerably more accurate (MacKinnon, 1975).

There are several ways the assessment centre approach differs from most of the leadership research approaches, and by looking at these differences we may get a handle on where we need to go in the future. First, *assessment centres attempt to measure behaviour*. There is an old adage in the social sciences that past behaviour is the best predictor of future behaviour, and one reason for the encouraging assessment centre results is that the technique takes that adage seriously. Second, in an assessment centre *behaviour is observed by several trained observers* across several situations (usually including leaderless group discussions in competitive and co-operative modes, in-baskets, and one-on-one interviews). That assessment simulations represent a diverse range of situations converges with current leadership research on contingencies, but they also represent a broader sampling of situational components than will be found in even the more complex contingency models. Finally, the criteria employed in assessment centre research usually involve outcomes of the leader's (not the group's) job performance: such things as promotion rate, salary increases, and increases in responsibility. While the leader can expect to influence the group's productivity and satisfaction, so do many circumstances beyond the leader's control. Leadership researchers might emulate the assessment centre methods by including more leader-specific outcomes along with the group criteria commonly employed.

While assessment centres still face a number of important problems (e.g. identifying the behaviours to be rated, improving judgemental combinations of ratings, finding more refined managerial performance criteria), the approach poses an embarrassing question for other leadership researchers: after so many years of research, what is it that leaders actually do? Getting beyond what researchers say they can or should do, simply what *do* they do?

No es lo mismo hablar de toros, que estar en el redondel. This is an old Spanish proverb which means 'It is not the same to talk of bulls as to be in the bullring'.

Considering the vast amount of empirical work on leadership, there is a startling lack of evidence on what leaders actually do. Part of this no doubt results from the elusive definition of the term leadership; if you don't know what a leader is, it is difficult to follow one around. A few available studies have looked at occupants of leadership roles in organizations and have used direct observation or diaries to catalogue the day-to-day activities of the role occupants. These data shed some light on (1) the pace of management work; (2) the degree to which the work group itself is a focus of managerial interaction; (3) the kinds of media central to managerial activity; and (4) a global picture of what life is like in the leadership bullring.

The pace of managerial work

Many models of leadership, particularly those advocating participative management or situational determination of an appropriate leadership style, seem to assume that leaders have a relatively small number of events about which style decisions must be made, and enough time to analyse the situation and choose a style.

Studies of foremen provide an interesting insight into these assumptions. In one study (Ponder, 1957), foremen averaged between 200 and 270 activities per eight-hour day. Other studies of higher level managers confirm the unrelenting pace of managerial work. A study of a Swedish top executive found that he was undisturbed for 23 minutes or more only 12 times in 35 days (Carlson, 1951). Mintzberg (1973), observing five top executives, found that half of their activities lasted 9 minutes or less, and only one-tenth lasted more than one hour. Mintzberg's observations led him to conclude that a manager's activities are 'characterized by brevity, variety, and fragmentation' (1973, p.31).

The hectic pace of managerial work is exacerbated by the manager's relative lack of control over it. Mintzberg (1975) found, for example, that the managers in his study initiated only 32 per cent of their contacts and that 93 per cent of the contacts were arranged on an *ad hoc* basis.

The pace of the work has implications for training, research, and practice. Because there are so many activities in a day and because there is so little uninterrupted time, the occupant of a formal leadership role must be, as Mintzberg (1973) calls it, proficient at superficiality. Training models which advocate rational decision strategies (e.g. analysing each situation to determine the appropriate decision style) make sense, but they are extremely difficult for a manager to implement. Research approaches which ignore the day-to-day processes of leadership are missing what may be critical dimensions—the crunch of the pace and the breadth of the activities. Finally, managers themselves can be easily overwhelmed. The work is demanding and largely reactive. Activities that require little time and are relatively routine may postpone other activities that are ambiguous and have no routine solution. Thus, larger decisions may be made by default.

Time with the work group

The fact that almost all current models of leadership focus on the leader and the immediate work group suggests that the relationship between leader and led is the most important aspect of the leadership process. Translated into what managers do,

one might expect that almost all of a manager's time is spent with members of the group.

Dubin's (1962) review indicated that foremen spend between 34 and 60 per cent of their interaction time with subordinates. Mintzberg's (1973) executives spent only 48 per cent of their contact time with subordinates, even though the subordinate groups contained most of their respective organizational memberships. This indicates that managers spend between 40 and 66 per cent of their time with non-subordinates—a group including superiors, peers, professional colleagues, members of other departments and units, and outsiders. Dubin (1962, p.15) concluded in his review that: 'It cannot be too strongly emphasized that horizontal relations among peers in management and the non-formal behavior systems through which such interactions are carried out constitute a dimension of organizational behavior long neglected and probably as important as authority relations'.

Surprisingly, managers spend relatively little of their interaction time with their superiors, seldom more than one-fifth, and usually closer to one-tenth, according to Mintzberg (1973).

The mosaic of available data shows that there is considerable variability in the amount of time a manager spends in contact with subordinates. While it is generally true that subordinate interactions consume the largest single block of a manager's time, it should not be concluded that leader–subordinate relationships are the only or even the most important aspect of the leadership process. In one study of 60 managers, group members accounted for an average of only 23·4 per cent of the total information sources listed by the leader (McCall, 1974).

More research on leadership needs to focus on the leader–system relationship and how the organizational leader fits into the systemic interaction matrix. Sayles (1964) and Mintzberg (1973), among others, have emphasized the major importance and complexity of the managers' information network. Unfortunately, empirical investigation is sorely lacking on the impact of non-subordinate interactions on leadership effectiveness.

Many leadership development programmes also suffer because they follow narrow leader–follower paradigms. Since there are few data on the impact and nature of other relationships, it is not surprising that few training programmes deal with them. One cannot help wondering, though, if we are creating a generation of managers who believe that their style with their immediate subordinates is the only matter of concern.

Managers and media

Studies of what managers do consistently find that their work is primarily oral. Much of this talk is directed at exchanging information (Mintzberg, 1973), and very little of it is spent giving orders or issuing instructions (Horne & Lupton, 1965).

With between 60 and 80 per cent of their time spent in oral exchanges, formal leaders cannot spend too much time with written communications (Dubin, 1962). In communicating with others, the manager would do well to remember that other managers, too, are focused on the spoken word. A successful leader, therefore, must have the ability to selectively 'hear', retain and transmit vast quantities of oral information and, perhaps even more difficult, selectively utilize the vast volume of written information. Ackoff (1967) has discussed the problems managers face with one form of written information—managerial information systems. One of his

conclusions is that managers have too much, rather than too little, information.

What leaders do: an integration

For formal leaders in organizations, the world consists of many activities (most of them of short duration), frequent interruptions, a large network of contacts extending far beyond the immediate work group, and a preponderance of oral interaction. How do these characteristics fit in with the mythology and empirical work on leadership?

First, notice that these dimensions of leadership represent the day-to-day processes that go on between the leader's 'moments of glory'. It is easy to latch on the 'Ich bin ein Berliner' and 'I have nothing to offer but blood, toil, tears and sweat', thereby ignoring what Kennedy or Churchill did in the daily conduct of their leadership roles. To the extent that we do know what these leaders were like, we owe that knowledge to journalists and not to the empirical leadership literature. Vail (in press) made this point by arguing that the *New Yorker* is the best social science journal. Most of the leaders with whom we have direct contact—our bosses, politicians, community figures—have less grandiose moments of glory, but they too engage in the process of leadership. What observational studies have shown us is that the leadership we react to—the inspiration, or lack of it, the autocratic or democratic behaviour —is only a part of the larger and more complex set of phenomena comprising the role of leader.

Second, leadership models which emphasize the style of a leader *vis-à-vis* the follower group have limited utility, even when they introduce situational contingencies. They have no explanatory power when it comes to non-subordinate interactions, and it is difficult to understand the relationship between some global measure of style and the literally hundreds of activities that are part of the daily life of a manager. The concentration on leadership style that pervades all of the mainstream leadership research reminds one of what Omar Bradley once said in a different context: 'This strategy would involve us in the wrong war, at the wrong place, at the wrong time, and with the wrong enemy.'

Third, the results of observational studies suggest a host of different variables and questions that might direct future leadership research and which pose challenges to leadership trainers. The presence of non-authority relationships and the emphasis on oral communication, coupled with the non-rational way decisions are made (e.g. March & Simon, 1958; Katz & Kahn, 1966), suggest that a major element of the leadership process is political. While social scientists have advocated the inclusion of political activity in studies of leadership, little empirical work in leadership has confronted these issues directly.

Another approach involves looking systematically at the impact of oral communication on leadership processes and outcomes. Skill in oral communication is measured routinely in some assessment centre operations (Bray, Campbell & Grant, 1974), but it has not received adequate attention as a variable in leadership. Related to the communication dimension are the cognitive processes whereby individuals in leadership roles somehow retain the information transmitted in oral interactions. Unlike the written word which automatically creates a record for future reference, the spoken word is easily lost.

More intriguing yet is Mintzberg's notion of proficient superficiality. Plagued by interruptions and activities of short duration, how do leaders synthesize, integrate, and understand the larger picture? Direct observation of behaviour can produce a cata-

logue of activities, but it cannot shed much light on the actor's mediation of events. How do all those activities fit together for the leader? One interpretation of the huge number of activities in the manager's day is that each activity represents a different situation. Most current leadership theories would imply that the manager should apply the correct style in each situation and thereby achieve the greatest effectiveness. Another way of looking at the problem is to say that leaders face a near-infinite set of situations and engage in a near-infinite set of behaviours. Many different combinations of behaviours may be effective in a given situation, so there may not be any one best way of responding. If so, the search for invariant truth is an academic exercise and any real understanding of leadership will involve a more holistic approach —one that looks beyond superficial behaviours and simplified taxonomies of situations.

TAKING PROCESS SERIOUSLY

In 1970 Campbell *et al.* depicted the leadership process as a function of the person, the behaviour, the outcomes of behaviour, environmental influences and feedback. Advocacy of a systems perspective on organizations and the leadership processes within them is not new (e.g. Katz & Kahn, 1966; Weick, 1969), and the current abundance of contingency models of leadership is a sign that researchers are moving more in that direction. Still, a number of current trends in leadership research seem to be holding back progress: (1) attempting to categorize a wide range of leadership behaviours into a few simple categories (e.g. structure and consideration); (2) defining the situation with a few simple categories focused on only the immediate situation (e.g. the task of the group) and the interpersonal relations between leader and led; (3) measuring leadership outcomes solely on the basis of group effectiveness; (4) emphasizing static rather than dynamic components of the organizational context (i.e. assuming that the situation stays the same over time); and (5) applying hypothesis-testing techniques to a conceptual area with no agreed upon definitions or paradigms (trying to solve problems before they have been identified).

Fortunately there are alternatives for research on leadership.

First, Mintzberg (1973) has shown that the classification of leader behaviours can be extended beyond the two basic styles of structure and consideration. Drawing on his observations of managerial work, he generated ten basic roles which he argued are typical of most managerial jobs. Only one, which he calls 'leader', focuses exclusively on the leader–subordinate interaction, while the other nine encompass such activities as monitoring and disseminating information, acting as a figurehead, negotiating, handling disturbances, etc. Mintzberg's work is only a beginning, but breaking the set of leadership styles and moving toward a more representative sampling of the behaviours involved in leadership heralds a productive advance in research and training.

Second, the introduction of macro-level environmental variables into the leadership context has yielded some interesting results. Pfeffer (in press), for example, has argued that leadership does not matter as much as we think it does. Reviewing a number of studies which examined the impact of such things as budgets, economic conditions, changes in top executive positions, and role-set expectations, he found that these and similar factors frequently override the effects of leadership on organizational outcomes.

Identification of important contextual factors is not an inherently exciting task, but the work of generating taxonomies for important variables has produced a number

of good starting points (e.g. Hackman & Oldham, 1974). The greater challenge for leadership researchers is to integrate these and other components into their thinking about, and models of, leadership. To date, most leadership theories make the assumption that the leader has a great deal of unilateral control; if the leader only used the appropriate style, the group would be more productive; if the leader understood group processes, the group would be more cohesive, creative and effective. Understanding how non-leader variables influence such outcomes would help both researchers and leaders by providing a more realistic perspective on just what the leader can and cannot hope to achieve.

Third, the measure of leader effectiveness is not and cannot be a simple index of group productivity or satisfaction. While group-level variables are important, there are too many factors mitigating the effects of leader behaviour on work group outcomes; and there are many leadership roles for which the work group cannot be identified precisely (for example, the role of prime minister) or for which group output is almost totally determined by some factor such as technology (for example, on the assembly line).

Assessment centres have attempted to develop different kinds of criteria for leadership success, including composite measures of responsibility (Wollowick & McNamara, 1969), but the criterion problem remains a major issue. At a minimum, both researchers and practitioners must realize that leadership effectiveness involves a number of areas of functioning—including how well the leader deals with non-subordinate relationships, how structures are designed and modified, development of human resources in the organization, utilization and dissemination of knowledge, creating and coping with change and actual task performance by the leader. Many of these dimensions do not lend themselves to easy measurement, but the development of behaviourally anchored measures (Smith & Kendall, 1963; Dunnette, Campbell & Hellervik, 1968) holds promise. The point is that simplified criteria are misleading, and breaking the rut of current leadership research will require increasing emphasis on the development of realistic performance measures.

Fourth, in most leadership research (and training) the situation is treated as a given. The technology is this, the climate is that, the task is something else. In reality, these and other components of a system are constantly changing. New machinery, new policies, new people are always entering systems (though the rate of change may vary), and the degree to which organizational components are interdependent is itself a variable (Weick, 1974). Leaders, then, do not simply face a number of different situations, but the situations themselves are changing. Part of the leadership process is clearly the leader's attempt to map the organizational dynamics which influence his or her functioning in the leadership role. Another component is how leaders influence the dynamics of their organizational environments by using, modifying and implementing structure.

Finally, the hard science paradigms used by most leadership researchers presume that the questions to be studied have been identified. Mitroff (in press) has argued that the leadership research is characterized by Type III errors—solving the wrong problem. The world is not divided into independent and dependent variables, nor is it divided into university departments. Social scientists have an arsenal of research methods which includes observation, participant observation, and ethnomethodology, as well as experimental and quasi-experimental designs. There are two points here: the first is that social scientists studying leadership should utilize many rather than a few

methodologies; second, an important part of leadership training might include helping non-scientists generate and interpret their own data.

TRAINING AND LEADERSHIP

Since our understanding of leadership is less than adequate, we might expect that training based on that knowledge would produce equivocal research results. Campbell reviewed the empirical literature on training and development and concluded, 'In sum, we know a few things but not very much' (1971, p.593). Stogdill also reviewed the leadership training literature and reached a similarly concise conclusion, 'It must be concluded that the research on leadership training is generally inadequate in both design and execution. It has failed to address itself to the most crucial problems of leadership . . .' (1974, p.199).

Most leadership training based on behavioural science repeats the mistakes of leadership research: (1) it tends to focus quite narrowly on the relationship between the leader and the group, and specifically on the issue of leadership style; (2) it fails to take into account the nature of managerial work—many activities, fragmentation, variety, non-hierarchical relationships, etc.; and (3) when situational considerations are included in training, they tend to be limited to the situation of the immediate work group (e.g. the task of the group, the quality of leader-member relations, the authority of the leader).

It may be useful for leaders to develop a knowledge of leadership styles and a sensitivity to their contingent application, but applying such learning on the job is a different matter. Instead of teaching content, leadership training courses might better focus on creating situations reflecting the daily demands of the leadership role, and, through the use of extensive feedback, allow the trainees to study their behaviour and its impact. While the value of simulations for research and training purposes has been articulated for some time (e.g. Weick, 1965), few *organizational* simulations have been designed and utilized.

One result of the hectic pace of managerial work is that managers seldom have time to reflect on their behaviour. On-the-job feedback is likely to be fragmented, badly timed, vague, and sometimes lacking entirely. One valuable outcome of a training experience is that it can provide the time for reflection on the process of leadership. To maximize this potential, the training must generate behaviour approximating that in the organizational role and must provide valid feedback on what the behaviours were and what their impact was. T-groups were high in generating feedback, but they created a situation with few parallels in the organizational setting. Thus, transfer of learning from the training situation to the job was difficult (Campbell & Dunnette, 1968). Simulations, too, can only be approximations of reality, but we do know enough about the context of managerial work to create reasonable approximations.

There are a number of different ways to approach leadership development. While the leadership literature is less than definitive, training based on styles and group dynamics at a minimum focuses a participant on leadership behaviour and its impact on group process. It also provides a vocabulary for thinking about and discussing issues relevant to leader-follower processes. However, since leader-follower interactions take place in a larger context, sensitization to leader-group issues is not enough.

With little data to guide them, trainers trying to operate from a systems perspective cannot provide many prescriptions. But they can allow participants to experience

a variety of situations and aid them in the diagnosis and evaluation of the behaviours observed. Training can provide participants with opportunities to experiment with alternative organizational structure, non-hierarchical relationships, and other organizationally relevant circumstances.

Given that leadership trainers frequently have to operate without the benefit of conclusive research findings, and in a virtual vacuum with respect to the larger issue of leader–system relationships, several guidelines come to mind for designing and implementing leadership development programmes:

(1) Build training paradigms that can answer research questions. It is a myth that trainers and researchers are by definition different breeds. Both operate with data, though the nature of the data and the rules of the game are somewhat different. Training programmes can provide data on basic leadership issues (McCall, 1975*b*), and such programmes should be designed to answer fundamental questions. This is not a call for programme evaluation, a badly needed but often impossible task. Rather, it is a suggestion that training implements some of the rules of research design.

One way this can be done is by using carefully constructed simulations of leadership situations. If behaviour is recorded prior to training interventions, it can provide research answers as well as here-and-now data for development.

(2) Construct and utilize simulations for training that capture the important elements of the target organization and the leadership roles within it. A simulation, by definition, is not the reality, but it can be much closer to it than we might think. If managerial work is as Mintzberg (1973) described it—fragmented, full of variety, crammed with activities of short duration—it makes sense to include such characteristics in leadership training. To the extent that politics, bargaining, and external constraints influence leader behaviour, it makes little sense to exclude them in a training setting. The suggestion is to take systems theory seriously by designing systemic training situations, and to collect data in the process.

(3) Provide participants with rich feedback on both their behaviour and its outcomes. Videotape is a useful aid, but peer and observer ratings can provide interpretive perspectives. If the research does not provide trainers with prescriptions, let the participants do the prescribing—but on the basis of real behaviour and multifaceted feedback.

(4) Emphasize the role of organizational and group structures in organizational processes. This is not to say that group dynamics and interpersonal interaction are unimportant, but to acknowledge that the ways organizations, groups, and processes are structured also affect the ways people behave. The creation, use, and modification of structure is a critical leadership activity.

(5) Build in follow-up back on the job. The transfer of learning from the training site to the organization is notoriously difficult to accomplish. Lasting change is unlikely unless minimal support, feedback, and control can be obtained in the work setting.

In sum, training can and must go on even though its research foundations are incomplete. It can accomplish important learning objectives by creating realistic simulations which maximize the participants' opportunity to receive valid feedback on behaviour and outcomes. At the same time, such training can generate important data on leadership issues.

SOME CONCLUDING REMARKS

One point of view is that leadership research should provide a basis for leadership training, which in turn is the medium through which social science knowledge is put into practice. If this is the case, several guidelines for future research on leadership can be postulated:

(1) Research should extend beyond its current foundations in leader–group relationships to include leader–system components. A beginning might be a systematic integration of existing taxonomies of situational/environmental variables into leadership approaches. Concomitantly, it will be necessary to develop new criteria for assessing leadership performance in the broader context of the organization as a system.

One mechanism for exploring the leader–system relationship is the increased utilization of organizational simulations. Through such mechanisms, the effects of macro and micro situational variables, as well as leader–group interactions, can be studied under partially controlled conditions.

(2) Researchers must utilize a broader array of tools for social inquiry. Complementing rigorous empirical methods with 'softer', exploratory methodologies could serve at least two important functions: (a) generating some new questions and a more holistic insight into leadership processes; and (b) broadening the range of phenomena that can be included in investigations of leadership in organizations (e.g. variables for which there are, as yet, no dependable measuring instruments). By using experimental and quasi-experimental designs to refine observations made with other methods, leadership research might avoid the dangerous bias inherent in dependence on a single technology for science.

(3) One hesitates to say that the concept of leadership style should be dropped altogether, but it does seem that continued emphasis on style is precluding other more fruitful approaches. We need more observational studies to examine in detail what individuals in leadership roles actually do. The evidence that is available clearly demonstrates that managers (and probably other kinds of leaders) engage in a wide variety of behaviours and many of their interactions do not involve subordinates. Moreover, as the focus turns to the process of leadership, global indices of behaviour have only marginal value.

(4) A process approach to leadership suggests several important variables that are currently neglected in the leadership research. One of these is the feedback process —the mechanism by which a leader finds out how well he or she is doing. Campbell *et al.* (1970) included the feedback loop in their presentation of the leadership process, but little systematic research is available on feedback in leadership. Some of the studies that do exist (Greller & Herold, 1975; McCall, 1975*a*; McCall & Rosen, 1975) indicate that obtaining and using feedback is important to leaders, and that feedback is a complicated process. Observing behaviour will not be enough to understand leadership. Researchers must also understand how the actors view their behaviour and how they assess its impact. This is feedback.

Another neglected variable is leadership succession. In most organizations, changes in leadership are relatively common. Recent looks at the impact of succession (e.g. Daum, 1975; Helmich, 1975) show that changes in leadership occur for a variety of reasons and can have a variety of effects. As yet, however, little is known about succession and how it affects leaders, subordinates, or systems.

Peter Vaill (1974) once remarked that management is a performing art. For Vaill,

'an art is the attempt to wrest more coherence and meaning out of more reality than we ordinarily try to deal with' (Vaill, in press). In these terms, leadership research and training, as well as management, are performing arts. Researchers, trainers, and practitioners share the challenge of wresting meaning out of leadership.

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READING 3

Leadership is a **language game**

L. R. Pondy

SOURCE

L. R. Pondy, 'Leadership is a language game', in M. W. McCall, Jr & M. M. Lombardo (eds), *Leadership: Where Else Can We Go?*, Duke University Press, Durham, NC, 1978, pp. 87–99.

Let me begin by sharing with you some doubts and impressions about the field of leadership.

1. Most people would agree, I think, that leadership is a form of social influence. But then so are most things that involve more than one person (e.g., social facilitation effects, group decision making). So have we solved anything by that categorization? I suppose it does exclude a few things (e.g., leadership as a personality trait), but not much, it seems to me. Perhaps it would help to say that by the term "leadership" we mean social (i.e., interpersonal) influence exercised by a person in some position of superior authority (leaving aside for the time being the source of the authority) over some subordinate.

But, of course, we all recognize that there are "informal" leaders; that is, people who exercise influence over group members without occupying any formally recognized slot. And informal leaders are so common that restricting the term "leadership" to something done by persons in formal leadership positions seems a bit silly. In any case, I entertain doubts as to whether thinking of leadership as a type of social influence is very helpful, although at the present moment I cannot present any viable alternatives.

2. Leadership is applied to a pastiche of behaviors, ranging from that of foreman to that of prophet. It seems unlikely to me that we understand those behaviors well enough to identify the elements common to all. George Graen has mentioned to me that while his Vertical Dyad Linkage model (Dansereau, Graen, & Haga, 1975) seemed to fit "administrative supervisors" reasonably well, the Ohio State data on "foremen" fit it much more poorly.

And I think of foremen and administrative supervisors as being conceptually adjacent! Have we been misled by the existence of a single term in our language to think that it reflects some uniform reality? Gregory Bateson (1972) has argued that our language is thing-oriented and is impoverished when it comes to thinking about, describing, and talking about relationships. Eskimos have seven different names for snow because they are so familiar with it. Does our insistence on the single term "leadership" say something about our familiarity or experience with it?

3. A closely related point: Our epistemology seems to force us to agree on a conceptual definition of the term "leadership." But Ian Mitroff has been urging on us some alternative inquiring strategies that stress eclecticism and dialecticism in place of agreement (see, for example, Mitroff & Pondy, 1974). Now surely there have been a multitude of conceptual schemes for describing leadership, but it seems to me that they have been operating independently with occasional attempts to identify, say, a low LPC score with initiating structure and with a directive leadership style (more on the question of "style" later).

Perhaps what I am suggesting here is that we not only disaggregate leadership conceptually (as suggested in point 2), but that we attempt to fully account for the diversity and divergence of interacting explanations. In other words, the current conceptual schemes are not different enough. They overlap one another too easily. We are getting dense coverage of too limited an area. To one who believes in a consensus epistemology, that would be a signal for celebration, a sure symptom that we are converging on a solution. But is it perhaps a precise solution to the wrong problem? With a style of inquiry that stresses consensus, we have no way of knowing whether we have converged on a local rather than a global optimum—a correct solution to the wrong problem. So, in both this point and the prior one, I am arguing for more variety in the way we think about leadership and in what we think of as leadership.

4. I find the concept of leadership "style" particularly disturbing. It connotes to me superficiality of action, without either sincerity of intent or substantive meaning. My guess is that early research-

ers on leadership style meant to say something about the whole manner in which the leader approached his task, including his attitudes and values, and that the research on democratic styles of leadership was a reaction on a very fundamental level to the excesses of totalitarian regimes. But somewhere along the line we lost sight of the "deep structure" or meaning of leadership style, and I see it being taught to and practiced by students only at the level of "surface structure," that is, only at the level of superficial expression. The terms deep and surface structure derive from the field of linguistics (e.g., Chomsky, 1972), and perhaps it would be worthwhile to take a small detour to explain how they are used there.

Very briefly, grammar is the relation between sound and meaning. In turn, grammar can be decomposed into phonetics, syntactics, and semantics. A phonetic representation (the surface structure of an expression) is what we ordinarily recognize as a string of words comprising a sentence, and phonetics is the study of the relation between sound and its phonetic representation. Semantics studies the relation between meaning and its semantic representation or deep structure, a set of primitive statements or expressions. Syntactics is the study of the relation between phonetic and semantic representations. To speak a language is to be master of all three components of grammar. Now back to leadership.

Suppose we think of leadership as a language. To practice, say, democratic leadership is to understand the set of meanings (values?) to be conveyed, to give them primitive expression, to translate them into stylistic representations, and ultimately to choose sounds and actions that manifest them. My worry is that this overarching process has been truncated, and that we have reduced the grammar of leadership to its phonetics. The syntactics and especially the semantics of leadership have been lost sight of. One particular conjecture about the source of this loss haunts me: Sounds, actions, and surface expressions are observable; they constitute behavior that can be "scientifically" measured in a reproducible way. But deep structures, and especially meanings, are elusive concepts that have no physical, behavioral counterpart. They cannot be observed. But if leadership is to be studied scientifically, attention must therefore be limited to the

observable, surface, stylistic components. I reject the epistemology implicit in this conjecture on both scientific and ethical grounds. Perhaps I have overdrawn the parallel between leadership and linguistics, but I do not think so.

5. Nearly all theories of leadership identify only a small number of strategies to choose from. You can use either a democratic, autocratic, or laissez-faire style. You can emphasize either consideration or initiating structure. Or if you really want to get fancy, Vroom and Yetton (1973) offer *six* different things you can do. Now there is something profoundly troubling about this. Invariably when I have attempted to teach extant leadership theories, especially to practicing managers, they have bridled under the constraints imposed by so few alternative ways of behaving. I believe that we have sacrificed the creative aspect of leadership for its programmatic aspects. Shouldn't we be trying to document the *variety* of leadership strategies, rather than trying to collapse it into a few constraining categories?

A lesson from linguistics is relevant here again. What is truly remarkable about language is its creative aspect. Virtually all utterances are novel—never before spoken. And even young children and intellectually subnormal people have the capacity to produce creative sentences. Since there is no limit to the length of the longest sentence, there is an unbounded (infinite?) number of possible sentences in a given language. And the problem of linguistics is to describe how this infinite set of sentences is produced and interpreted with our *finite* (!) brain capacities. In fact, Chomsky defines the explanation of this creative aspect as the core problem of human language:

> Having mastered a language, one is able to understand an indefinite number of expressions that are new to one's experience, that bear no simple resemblance and are in no simple way analogous to the expressions that constitute one's linguistic experience: and one is able, with greater or less facility, to produce such expressions on an appropriate occasion, despite their novelty and independently of detectable stimulus configurations, and to be understood by others who share this still mysterious ability. The normal use of language

> is, in this sense, a creative activity. This creative aspect of normal language use is one fundamental factor that distinguishes human language from any known system of animal communication. [Chomsky, 1972, p. 100]

Chomsky's proposed solution to the problem of finite mind/infinite language is a system of "generative grammar," the heart of which is a relatively small number of transformational rules by which semantic and phonetic representations are mapped into one another. Vroom and Yetton's (1973) decision-tree approach is a step in the right direction of developing a set of rules for deriving the "surface structure" of leadership, but I believe that their procedure still suffers the fundamental flaw of all leadership theories—the failure to recognize the creative unboundedness of leadership acts. In case it is in doubt, I believe the set of leadership acts is of the same order of magnitude as the set of sentences in a natural language. Language is after all one of the key tools of social influence.

6. For the most part, leadership research has limited itself to looking at social influence that is of the direct, face-to-face variety. Perhaps this is why there has been so much emphasis on personal style. But some of the most important forms of influence are remote from the behavior being induced. When I start up my car, a buzzer and a light on the dashboard instruct me to fasten my seat belt. So I am under the impersonal influence of those devices. But more remotely, I am being influenced by the engineer who designed the devices, by the legislators and bureaucrats who required their use, and by Ralph Nader who caused us to think about auto safety in the first place. Does it make sense to think of these influences as instances of "leadership"?

One of my colleagues at the University of Illinois, Greg Oldham, is trying to broaden the concept of leadership to include any kind of control the leader has over the environment of the group member (Oldham, 1974). I feel very ambivalent about this effort. It accords with my intuition that social influence ought not to be limited to visible, face-to-face interactions. On the other hand, it so diffuses the concept of leadership that it ceases to be an identifiable phenomenon at all, and seems to merge with the whole

field of "management." Nevertheless, my inclination is to go with Oldham and broaden the concept to include all of the indirect, remote, and invisible influences of leadership on behavior.

An interesting diversion is suggested by this point. Suppose leadership is a residual category to which we assign the causal responsibility for events we cannot otherwise explain. Several conclusions follow very rapidly. (1) Once the category exists we will try to fill it, so more and more things will be attributed to "leadership," especially in turbulent environments where there are a great number of unique events to make sense of. So we should expect the concept of leadership to expand in high-variety environments and to contract in low-variety environments. Does this suggest a possible study of what people in different settings mean by the term leadership? (2) Leadership results from our assigning *personal* responsibility for events, rather than from the workings of impersonal forces. This assignment is more likely after a success than after a failure. This refines the previous point, to wit, that leadership as an attributional category will expand only upon successful coping with turbulence. (3) Cultures vary in the degree to which personhood is a central concept. It is striking to walk from the Egyptian rooms into the Greek rooms of the British Museum and be hit with the shift in god-forms from animal to human characteristics. (Does this have anything to do with Greece's being the crucible of democracy?) Back from the diversion to the main point—that leadership does (should?) include very remote influences on behavior.

7. One of the least visible influences on our behavior is the language we use. "Sharing a language with other persons provides the subtlest and most powerful of all tools for controlling the behavior of these other persons to one's advantage" (Morris, 1949, p. 214). This suggests an experimental paradigm that could spawn a hundred fascinating studies: How is a leader's effectiveness related to the language overlap with his subordinates? (Is it conceivable that democratic leadership works because it promotes language-sharing? Does that mean that the comparative advantage of democratic leadership will be greatest when language overlap is initially minimal?) My guess is that it should be relatively easy to manipulate language overlap experimentally. But

this forces us to ask the question, what does it mean to "share a language"?

One source of not-sharing is having a different lexicon or vocabulary, that is, different words appear in two different languages. This is the less troublesome type of not-sharing (or language-mismatch) because it carries its own signal of mismatch; it generates the question, "What does that mean?" A second and more serious type of language-mismatch is when the lexicons are identical but the "semanticons" differ, that is, when the meanings attached to the words are different. In this case the signal of mismatch is implicit in the way the words are *used*, and thus much more difficult to detect than lexical mismatches. The meaning of a word is the set of ways in which it is used (Parkinson, 1968; Wittgenstein, 1974). Note that this suggests an operational way of experimentally generating different semanticons for the leaders and their subordinates: Give each of them a different set of uses of certain key terms—a sort of word history.

This also says something about how languages come to be shared—by sharing experiences and *talking* about them, that is, by using words and thereby establishing shared meanings. But this suggests that languages evolve when a given lexicon is used to describe new events. That is, meanings change roughly as fast as the enacted environment changes, and the rate of language renewal will need to keep pace if leadership effectiveness is to be sustained. Does this suggest that one of the neglected leadership functions is language renewal? And let me stress a crucial point: It is not sufficient to enact a shared environment; it has to be talked about. Perhaps this is why several studies have shown strong relationships among the number of committees or the frequency of committee meetings and the rates of program change (e.g., Hage, Aiken, & Marrett, 1971). What is communicated in a communication is not words, but meanings.[1]

8. In placing stress on language overlap and meaning creation, we may be missing an obvious point—that the leader's subtle use of the language may also be an important factor in determining his effectiveness, both in enhancing his credibility and in manag-

1. See Kurt Back's (1962, pp. 35–48) distinction between a stimulus and a message.

ing the influence process. Let me give you an example. In Britain, plural verbs are used in certain places where we would use the singular tense, and this inevitably reveals something about the speaker's perception of the relation of group to individual. To be specific, one says, "The government *are* . . ." and "Leeds United *have* defeated West Ham," whereas we would use *is* and *has* and thus reveal our attitude toward the unified action of collectivities. I have no idea how to begin to measure or quantify this notion of subtlety in usage of language, but surely it must be related to the leader's empathy or sensitivity to his colleagues.

9. What does it mean to be an "effective" leader? My perception of research in the field is that effectiveness is typically conceptualized as "performance of the subordinate group"—usually some kind of output measure—or perhaps as compliance or adherence to the leader's directives. In any case, the effectiveness concept and measure is invariably a behavioral one. The "good" leader is one who can get his subordinates to *do* something. What happens if we force ourselves away from this marriage to behavioral concepts? What kind of insights can we get if we say that the effectiveness of a leader lies in his ability to make activity meaningful for those in his role set—not to change behavior but to give others a sense of understanding what they are doing, and especially to articulate it so they can communicate about the meaning of their behavior. Musicians use this kind of terminology to describe their reactions to conductors. Faulkner (1973) quotes musicians as saying of their conductor, "[he] gives us gestures of expression but they're not showing us his meaning," or, "He doesn't communicate with technique or with words. He sort of looks surprised when we play," or they refer to the difference between "playing notes" and "making music." Now some of these expressions refer to an internal, nonarticulated sense of understanding. But the content of the feeling cannot be communicated (except that you may be able to communicate that you have it without describing it). If in addition the leader can *put it into words,* then the meaning of what the group is doing becomes a *social* fact. That is terribly important! The meaning can be exchanged, talked about, modified, amplified, and used for internal processing of information.

The real power of Martin Luther King was not only that he had a dream, but that he could describe it, that it became public, and therefore accessible to millions of people. This dual capacity (surely it is much more than a mere trait) to make sense of things *and* to put them into language meaningful to large numbers of people gives the person who has it enormous leverage. (I must confess to racking my creative insight to the breaking point to find the right phrase to describe this capacity, but the effort was, sad to report, in vain!) One final word: This capacity to go public with sense making involves putting very profound ideas in very simple language. Perhaps that is why it is so rare. But its rarity should not dissuade us from its study.

So far in these notes, I have flirted with language concepts in several different places at two or three different levels. *At one level* I was trying to say that the word "leadership," by its existence, has influenced how we, as social scientists, see the world and how we take an undifferentiated reality and cut it up into one set of chunks rather than another set. Although the uses of a word constitute its meaning, the meaning has at least an instantaneous autonomy and control over the nature of variations in its use. Part of the aim of this conference is to overcome this semantic inertia and to accelerate variations in use of the term leadership. Which of the proposed variations are *selected* for attention by the other participants will depend on how the variations are phrased. But whether these different meanings of the term leadership are *retained* in usage will probably depend on how strong are the participants' vested interests in the current meaning. This process of changing the meaning of a word is an instance of what Wittgenstein has called a "language game." Does this language game (changing the meaning of a word) include processes that we feel comfortable thinking about as "leadership"?

At a second level, I was saying that a leader's understanding of the subtleties of meaning are important to his effectiveness. We can sharpen this point by noting that thought and communication involve a multiplicity of language games in which not only individual words have different meanings, but words in general may have different functions. In part, "understanding the subtleties" requires knowing which language game you are playing. For example, Wittgenstein identifies "reporting an event" and "giving

and obeying orders" as distinct language games. The phrase "Five slabs!" in the former game means "There are five slabs," and in the latter game "Bring me five slabs." A more appropriate title for this essay would be "Leadership is a *collection of* language games."

At a third level, how linguistics (and, in particular, Chomsky) has approached the study of language provides a prototype worth imitating. I have already mentioned the creative use of language as an obvious fact that any explanation of language must deal with. No sophisticated data collection procedures and multivariate analyses are needed to establish that fact. Equally important, and I have not yet mentioned this point, is that Chomsky has done two things to make possible a formal, and therefore tractable but still insight-rich, study of language.

First, he distinguished between linguistic competence and performance. By competence he meant those aspects of speech that are person-independent and due only to the formal structure of the language. By performance, he meant how the language is actually spoken, with frequent errors of syntax, stopping and starting over, and so forth. By focusing on language competence, and ignoring issues of performance for the time being, he has been able to formulate solvable problems about the formal structure of language.

Second, by inventing the concepts of phonetic and semantic representations, he has been able to define the field of syntactics, again allowing him to formulate solvable problems, but in a way that the simplifications can be relaxed when a foothold has been established in syntactics.

There is another issue here. Chomsky is interested in understanding the human mind, as opposed to behavior, and he sees language as a way of gaining insight into mind, inasmuch as language is a creation of mind. I have not yet traced the implications of these strategies of inquiry for research on leadership, nor am I certain that they would help leadership research if applied. But they do represent an approach to inquiry that is radically different from that followed by leadership researchers. And thus, if experimented with, they represent a potential source of creative insight.

Although this essay is meant to be an informal set of notes that

raises certain issues without necessarily developing them fully, it may be worthwhile to say a few more words about Wittgenstein's concept of language games before concluding. This is a difficult task inasmuch as he nowhere provides a concise definition of either language or language game—and with good reason. To be consistent with his philosophical position, he can establish the meaning of a word only by using it! Just as chess, baseball, and ring-around-the-rosie seem to share no characteristic in common, they still belong to the fuzzy-edged set of things called games. The same with language. Language is used to describe pain and other nonsharable inner sensations, to communicate, to express an idea, and so forth. These are all uses of language, but very different uses, with some overlapping characteristics between some of the uses, but no single attribute common to all. To quote Wittgenstein (1974):

> But how many different kinds of sentences are there? Say assertion, question, and command?— There are *countless* kinds, countless different kinds of use of what we call "symbols," "words," "sentences." And this multiplicity is not something fixed, given once and for all; but new types of language, new language-games, as we may say, come into existence, and others become obsolete and get forgotten. . . . Here the term "language-game" is meant to bring into prominence the fact that *speaking* of language is part of an activity, or of a form of life. . . . If you do not keep the multiplicity of language-games in view, you will perhaps be inclined to ask questions like: "What is a question?"— Is it the statement that I do not know such-and-such, or the statement that I wish the other person would tell me . . . ? Or is it the description of my mental state of uncertainty?— And is the cry, "Help!" such a description? [pp. 11–12]

This quote barely begins to give an inkling of Wittgenstein's ideas on language and language games. The significance for us is twofold. First, it suggests that we begin to think of leadership, like language, as a collection of games with *some* similarities, but no single characteristic common to all of them. Second, it begins to map out the philosophical underpinnings of the role of language and meaning in leadership and behavior. At least it has had

a profound influence on my own thinking about how meanings are established and what it means to communicate.

Let me conclude with a thought and a poem.

On rereading these notes, there were times when I questioned the sanity of their author. But sanity is the result of a process of social definition. How tolerantly a social system defines sanity has a profound effect on how adaptive that system can be. Marginally sane acts are sources of creativity. Define them to be insane, rather than merely eccentric, and you rob the system of that source of creativity. The fact that this conference may define these ideas to be intriguing rather than insane says something unexpectedly healthy about the field of leadership.

This poem is from Chuang-Tsu (fourth century B.C.):

How shall I talk of the sea to the frog,
if he has never left his pond?

How shall I talk of the frost to the bird of the summer land,
if it has never left the land of its birth?

How shall I talk of life with the sage,
if he is the prisoner of his doctrine?

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Annotated bibliography

Ball, T. (ed.). *Political Theory and Praxis: New Perspectives.* University of Minnesota Press, Minneapolis, Minn., 1977.
This is a collection of essays which move beyond the normal conceptualisation of politics as resource allocation. Note in particular Brian Fay's article, 'How people change themselves: The relationship between critical theory and its audience', at the end of the book.

Bass, B.M. *Stogdill's Handbook of Leadership: A Survey of Theory and Research.* Free Press, New York, 1981.
Stogdill published his *Handbook of Leadership* in 1974. When he died in 1978, Bass took on the task of updating the work. The result is an encyclopaedic survey of leadership – 35 chapters and over 800 pages. It is a valuable source for those interested in interpersonal leadership and the accompanying research programs. It treats political aspects of leadership only marginally.

Bellone, C.J. (ed.). *Organizational Theory and the New Public Administration.* Allyn & Bacon, Boston, Mass, 1980.
A collection of readings which attempt to revitalise the field of public administration. While not treating leadership *per se*, the book stresses the need to address values and social issues within an administrative context.

Brown, R.H. 'Bureaucracy as praxis: Toward a political phenomenology of formal organizations'. *Administrative Science Quarterly*, vol. 23, no. 3, 1978, pp. 365–82.
Brown attempts to fuse the micro-sociology of Garfunkel with the macro-sociology of Marxism. He concludes that all organisational actors help in the creation of models of reality, and that we will all be better off to the degree that we attempt to make those models incorporate a politically just system. An informative article, well worth reading.

Burns, J.M. *Leadership.* Harper & Row, New York, 1978.
This Pulitzer-Prize-winning text presents an innovative historical overview of leadership. It has had enormous impact on the field. Burns distinguishes between transactional (based on exchange) leadership and transformational (changing goals and values) leadership, and then examines in some detail types of leaders who use each approach, blending historical and political analysis. Ghandi, Lenin, Hitler and numerous others are analysed and discussed. This is required reading for any student of leadership.

Byrt, W.J. *Leaders and Leadership.* Sun Books, Melbourne, 1978.
Byrt develops a theory of leadership as a process wherein leaders respond to the unmet needs of the led. He illustrates this by excellent case studies of Australian politicians, businessmen and bureaucrats. All, though, are men.

Davies, A.F. *Skills, Outlooks and Passions: A Psychoanalytic Contribution to the Study of Politics*. Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 1980.
Davies uses what he termed 'psycho-biography' to gain a 'deep' understanding of political types, which he categorises as 'agitators', 'administrators' and 'theorists'. He combines personality profiles with biographical data to come up with a meaningful and detailed analysis of individuals in political life.

Dubin, R. 'Metaphors of leadership: An overview.' In J. G. Hunt & L. L. Larson (eds). *Crosscurrents in Leadership*. Southern Illinois University Press, Carbondale, Ill., 1979.
The author explores leadership as a metaphorical construct, arguing that leadership is not a function of position nor should it be confused with management. Rather, it has symbolic importance, illustrated by leadership-at-a-distance, i.e., the leader in an organisation who may have little or no face-to-face contact with followers yet remains tremendously influential. Several metaphors of leadership are presented and discussed.

Edelman, M. *Political Language: Words that Succeed and Policies that Fail*. Academic Press, New York, 1977.
In this significant monograph, Edelman describes the symbolic and political uses of language in protecting the established regime. His rich and complex analysis delves into the origins of poverty and 'deviant' behaviour, linking them to the structural economic system, but then showing how it is convenient to both masses and elite *not* to recognise them as systemic problems, but rather to create linguistic concealment. This is a book well worth reading for any student of politics or leadership.

Fay, B. *Social Theory and Political Practice*. Allen & Unwin, London, 1975.
Fay discusses three paradigms of social and poltical science—the positivist, the interpretive and the critical. He rejects the positivist model because of its confusion over ends and means and its ideological content. While more sympathetic to the interpretive paradigm, it too is rejected because of a lack of a theory of social action. Finally, Fay presents the critical model of social science, arguing that the proper role of the social scientist lies in educating individuals with regard to social conditions and social practice.

Fiedler, F.E. *A Theory of Leadership Effectiveness*. McGraw-Hill, New York, 1967.
The book that spawned a generation of studies on the contingency theory of leadership. Looks at leader-group interaction in light of various factors, such as tasks and relationships.

Freire, P. *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*. Seabury Press, New York, 1974.
A classic example of an educative model in practice. The book yields many valuable insights into how citizens could take the leadership in developing critical consciousness among those oppressed and dominated. Shows how theory can influence and activate a critical practice.

Habermas, J. *Communication and the Evolution of Society*. Beacon Press, Boston, Mass., 1979.
For those interested in Habermas's analysis of language and the ideal speech situation, the first chapter is helpful. The book also presents Habermas's view of social evolution as well as some further thoughts on legitimation crisis. The introduction by McCarthy is invaluable.

Held, D. *Introduction to Critical Theory: Horkheimer to Habermas*. University of California Press, Berkeley and Los Angeles, Calif., 1980.
This is a lucid, readable introduction to the corpus of the Frankfurt School. Part One is a historical and philosophical account of the Frankfurt School and its various analyses of modern culture, rationality, society, and so on. Part Two is devoted to Habermas and his formulations. Part Three is a critical but sympathetic assessment of critical theory.

Hodgkinson, C. *The Philosophy of Leadership*. Blackwell, Oxford, 1983.
A difficult text, this book attempts to re-establish the role of philosophy and of values in leadership. Hodgkinson sees administration as 'philosophy-in-action' and, essentially, as leadership. He analyses types of values and then provides a lengthy discussion of how administrative leaders can engage in value analysis. He ends his text with a set of self-conscious maxims and credos which summarise what has gone before.

Hunt, J.G., & Larson, L.L. (eds). *Leadership: Beyond Establishment Views*. Southern Illinois University Press, Carbondale, Ill., 1981.
This selection of readings presents a wide range of views on both leadership and management, treating both theory and methodology. Some of the readings are critical of current leadership research and theory. See in particular Mintzberg's critique of articles in the volume: 'If you're not serving Bill and Barbara, then you're not serving leadership' (pp. 239–59).

Jago, A.G. 'Leadership: Perspectives in theory and research'. *Management Science*, vol. 28, no. 3, 1982, pp. 315–36.

Jago provides four perspectives from which to view leadership theory: Type I, leadership traits; Type II, leadership behaviour; Type III, contingency theory; and Type IV, second-generation contingency models. This article is useful for its overview of much of the orthodox research into leadership.

Kellerman, B. *Leadership: Multidisciplinary Perspectives*. Prentice-Hall, Englewood Cliffs, NJ, 1984.
This is a first-rate collection of essays which attempt to analyse the concept of leadership from perspectives grounded in history, psychoanalysis, sociology, political science, feminist studies, adult development, contructivist paradigms and philosophy. The contributors are highly regarded and, taken as a whole, breathe considerable new life into the subject. In general, leadership is approached as a socio-political phenomenon, rather than as an exercise in interpersonal relations. This text should be quite influential in the future.

Machiavelli, N. *The Prince*. In C.W. Eliot (ed.). *The Harvard Classics*, vol. 36. Collier, New York, 1938.
It would be remiss not to include this well-known classic in a bibliography on leadership. Machiavelli provides a discussion of how to get, and hold, power, in the context of sixteenth-century Italy. He might be considered the first of the situational theorists: 'And so when occasion requires the cautious man to act impetuously, he cannot do so and is undone: whereas, had he changed his nature with time and circumstances, his fortune would have been unchanged' (p. 81).

McCall, M.W. Jr, & Lombardo, M.M. (eds). *Leadership: Where Else Can We Go?*. Duke University Press, Durham, NC, 1978.
The proceedings of a conference called on account of the dissipated nature of leadership research, this collection provides interesting and varied views on leadership. Perhaps a common theme which occurs in the book is a rejection of the positivistic research undertaken into leadership and a call for new, creative and 'non-rigorous' approaches. Highly recommended, this text allows the student of leadership to conceptualise the subject within a variety of frames.

Ramos, A.G. *The New Science of Organizations: A Reconceptualisation of the Wealth of Nations*. University of Toronto Press, Toronto, 1981.
Although not directly concerned with leadership, Ramos's critical analysis of organisational theory and administrative science deserves reading by those concerned with leadership-as-praxis. A large part of his argument deals with cognitive politics, that is, the distortions of language and thought which serve the ends of some

interest group. Such distortions, he argues, serves to preserve a market-centered organisational structure in society. Centered on the market, that is, on exchange relations, such a structure is alienating and inhumane. Ramos calls for the development of a 'multi-centric' society – a society where there are multiple organisational forms, the market being only one.

Selznick, P. *Leadership in Administration: A Sociological Interpretation.* Harper & Row, New York, 1957.
Selznick was a pioneer in giving leadership a sociological and institutional dimension. Many of the current crop of ideas on leadership – its symbolic and valuation importance – find their roots in his work.

Sergiovanni, T. J., & Corbally, J.E. (eds). *Leadership and Organizational Culture.* University of Illinois Press, Urbana, Ill. 1984.
Representative of the newer approach to leadership, this collection of 18 essays is an important contribution to the literature on leadership and organisations. Part I is an attempt to reconceptualise leadership in more culturally significant terms. Part II examines organisations as cultural and ideological systems. Part III provides some critical perspectives on administration and organisation. Part IV summarises and discusses how theory can be put into practice. Required reading for those who need to be up to date about developments in leadership and organisational studies.

Tucker, R.C. *Politics as Leadership.* University of Missouri Press, Columbia, Mo., 1981.
In this slim volume, Tucker claims that politics, instead of being the struggle for, and exercise of, power, can be viewed as leadership. He defines the process of political leadership and the need for diagnosis, policy development and policy implementation, and then looks at leadership in social movements. The last section is a call for more effective leadership, given our global crises in armament control, food supply and other areas.

Tyack, D., & Hansot, E. *Managers of Virtue: Public School Leadership in America, 1820–1980.* Basic Books, New York, 1982.
A good example of that genre of historical research which reconstructs historical events within a specific theoretical framework. The book is very readable and provides a detailed account of how individuals effected change in schools. Ends with a stirring call for recommitment to public education. Should be read at the very least for the case descriptions of leaders in action in schools.

Yukl, G.A. *Leadership in Organizations*. Prentice-Hall, Englewood Cliffs, NJ, 1981.

This is an orthodox, business-oriented survey of the mainstream research into leadership. Unremarkable in scope, it provides a source for the student who wishes a not-too-long text on leadership research undertaken within a positivistic model.

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Bill Foster is an Associate Professor in the Division of Leadership and Administration, School of Education, University of San Diego. He received an undergraduate degree, in sociology, from the University of Santa Clara and his doctorate, in educational administration, from the University of Pennsylvania. He has contributed to such journals as *Harvard Educational Review, Educational Theory* and *Issues in Education*, as well as to Readers in school culture and ethics for administrators. He is currently developing a textbook for educational administration which presents alternative perspectives on the field. His work explores the relationship of critical theory and the new sociology to issues in education and administration.

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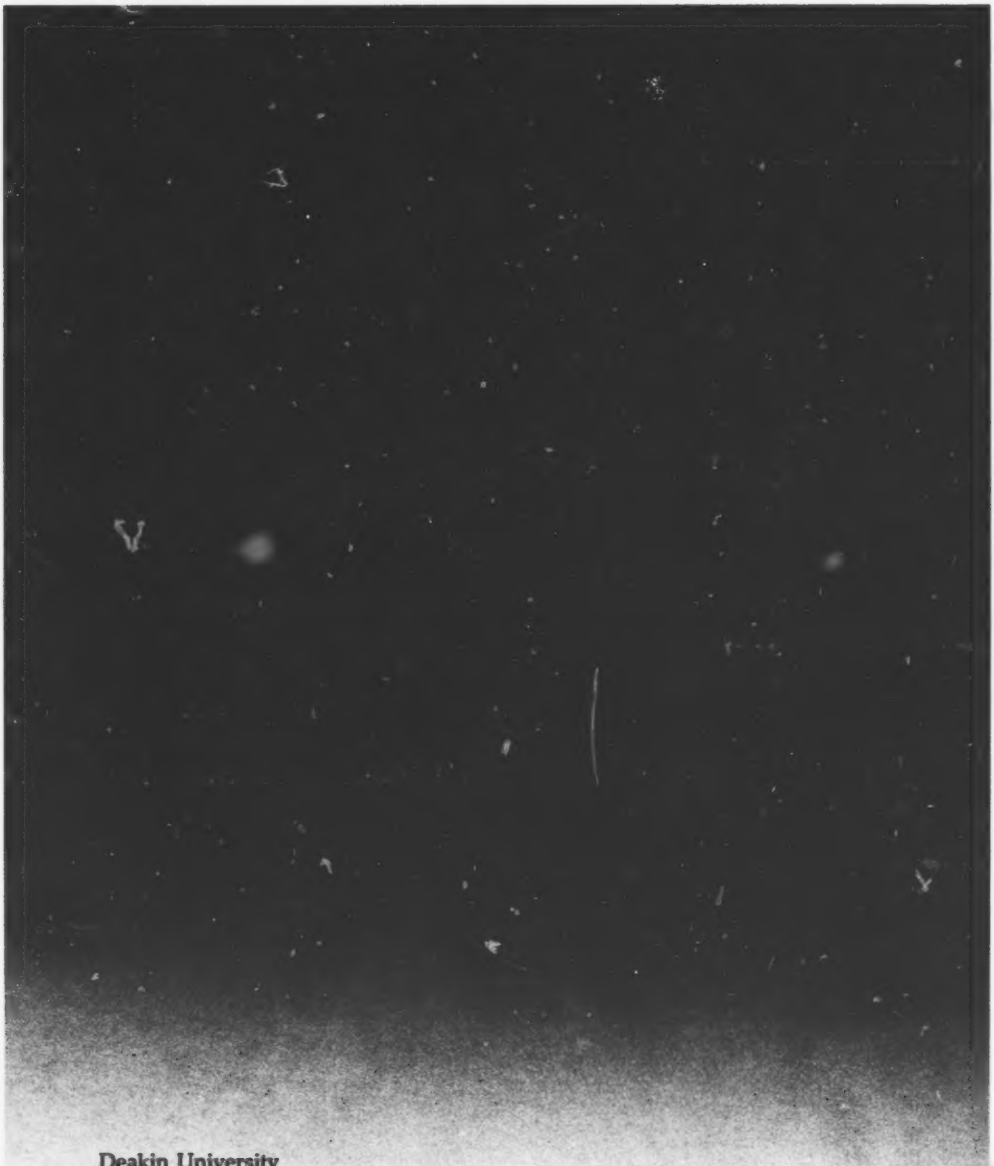

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